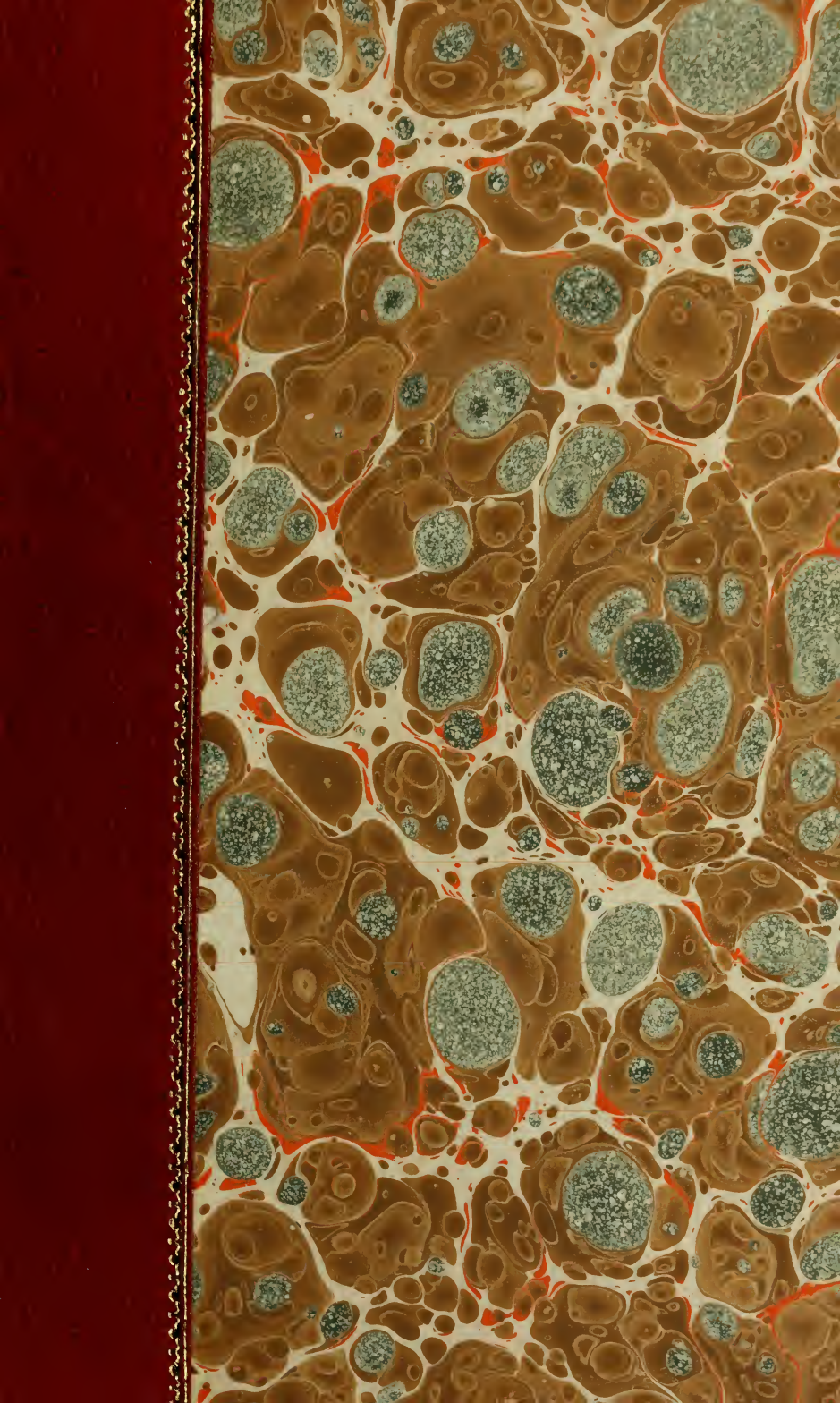

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LETTERS

TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE

TOWN AND LORDSHIP

OF

NEWRY.

BY

JOSEPH POLLOCK, ESQ.

DUBLIN:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT may ſeem that many of the facts relative to the late Dungannon Convention, if not the whole hiſtory of it, contained in the following ſheets, are either too long paſſed, or too inſignificant in themſelves, to be worth recording, or preſenting in this manner to the public. Nothing is more poſſible, ſurely, than that a writer of any kind ſhould deceive himſelf as to the value both of his ſubject and work. But the writer of theſe letters is much deceived if, whatever apology may be neceſſary for particular paſſages, written when they were intended for a much earlier and leſs extenſive production, the whole chain of facts here given, and the obſervations interſperſed, will not be found, by either a philoſophical or a ſafe practical politician, to be worthy of attention, as ſerving to diſplay or illuſtrate the opinions, ſpirit, hiſtory, and *political neceſſities* of this country,

country, if not of the times. The writing was, perhaps unneceſſarily ſuſpended for a time, in conſequence of *doubts*, whether certain criminal proſecutions, expected early in this month, would not make the publication of parts of theſe letters either improper, or likely in ſome manner to bear hard on an individual, for whom, whether he has miſconducted himſelf or not in the matter alluded to, the writer entertains a perſonal reſpect.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

GENTLEMEN,

HAVING thought it my duty to accept the honour of your Delegation to Dungannon, though not inſenſible of the private inconvenience and anxiety that muſt attend it, I am induced, from the ſame motives, to employ ſuch part of my time as I have been able to ſpare, after my return to town, in explaining the principles which directed my conduct as your Delegate, accompanying the explanation with ſuch obſervations as the ſubject, and the peculiar criſis, ſeem to require. I do ſo, not merely to defend myſelf againſt certain attacks and miſrepreſentations, not perfectly indirect, with which I have been honoured, in *newſpapers* and *flying ſheets*, and which converſation, I find, has handſomely circulated and

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improved on. Were this my only object, I ſhould probably think it both ſafer and pleaſanter to truſt the defence of my character to time, than to riſk even the appearance of a vain intruſion on public attention, or the farther expoſure of my name to miſconception, or intereſted malevolence. But a duty ſuperior to perſonal prudence or delicacy, that which I owe to the *peace*, and, I think, the *liberty* of my country, ſeems to command me at this moment to ſpeak *opinions* which I feel myſelf compelled to entertain, and to detail *facts* which appear to me a ſubject for ſerious conſideration.

The Ulſter Delegates have declared, that a *National Convention* may probably become *neceſſary*, and have taken meaſures, in that caſe, to concert the *means*. The ſame ſpirits that called Ulſter, will, if their agency prevail, aſſemble the Delegates of the Nation. What may, or may not, be the conſequence of ſuch an aſſembly, convened at ſuch a time—how far it may tend to enſure or to endanger, to confirm or to deſtroy, the peace or the liberty of the nation, I believe few rational and honeſt men will pretend to foreſee. But this, at leaſt, ſeems clear;—that when a meaſure thus pregnant with good or with ill is propoſed, and becomes probable, no facts or obſervations can be unimportant, that tend to

ſhew to the nation, what ſeem to be the prevailing opinions, ſpirit, and temper of the Province of Ulſter;—none can be unimportant, that tend to excite each man, in every part of the nation, to be prudent, and vigilant, and determined, in his own poſt or ſtation; none that may tend to *warn* both government and people of the *conſequences* that may flow from intemperance, raſhneſs, or paſſion of any kind, or that may tend to impreſs on the public mind the neceſſity of weighing, at this awful moment, moſt deliberately and deeply, men and their meaſures, principles and their probable conſequences.

On ſuch an occaſion, away with all private tenderneſs for individuals, all perſonal deference for bodies of men, all enthuſiaſm on the anniverſary of EIGHTY-TWO, and all the wit-engendered and high-ſounding hypocriſies which we are expoſed to, about the SINAI of the people, and the holy and irreſiſtible *oracles* of DUNGANNON!

I *worſhip* not the people; for I do not intend either to miſlead or betray them. I will not lick the duſt under their feet; for I wiſh not to mount on their ſhoulders, or to plant my heel in their neck. I reſpect the *rights* of the people, for this plain reaſon, if for no other, that I am, and ever muſt be, one of them. Not over-induſtrious

in the arts of riſing, ſimple as I ſee them to be, and within reach of my hand as I have known the means, I have not a patron on earth, to whom I can pretend to ſay I look for proſpect of a favour; or from whom the conduct I have held, and now hold, ſeems, in my judgment, the moſt probable means of procuring one. I recollect alſo, as well as other gentlemen, and have, perhaps, as much perſonal intereſt in recollecting, where Dungannon *ſtood*, and where I wiſh it for ever to ſtand, in name and in honour. But I would prove my reſpect for Dungannon, by preventing its *name* from becoming the occaſion of miſchief, and my love for the people, by an honeſt endeavour to preſerve and to promote their *happineſs*. Their happineſs I conſider as of infinitely more importance, than their *occaſional* and *indigeſted opinions*—and where theſe opinions ſeem, in their conſequences, to go to a hazard of their very exiſtence as a free nation, I will then tell them *truth*, and what I *think* truth, though I ſhould emigrate.

But it is not to the people alone, that truth ſhould now be told. Government ſeem to have as much occaſion for information on ſome points, as many of them can have, upon others. They ſhould know better, perhaps, the temper and ſpirit

ſpirit of the people whom they are bound to ſerve. They ſhould be warned, that, though there are men, even among their oppoſers, who will dare to confeſs, as I do—that *they ought now to be ſtrong*, ought now to be able to repel invaſion, and, if neceſſary, to repreſs ſedition;—yet, *if their wiſdom go not hand in hand with their ſtrength*, if they ſhew not a diſpoſition to concede what *ought* to be conceded—if they ſhew a reſolution to govern by *power alone*—if they diſtruſt, and would diſarm, and would keep diſarmed, *the whole people*—the innocent, and the moderate, and the well-affected, as well as the turbulent, or thoſe who may be diſpoſed to ſedition, or to a revolution—if they would irritate, if they do not ſoothe, the public mind—the *power* ſo to govern (ſuppoſing it their's, at this moment) *cannot remain for ever*. Time and chance, we ſee, happen to human things. Nothing ſeems now, in fact, impoſſible. Men muſt now be held by "the bands of a man," not the fetters of a ſlave. They muſt be governed by their minds, not ſubjugated in their perſons. Government will look to this, I truſt, nay I believe they will;—elſe may they ſoon ceaſe to be a government, or may reign over a bloody deſert.——If ſuch things ſhould happen, it will be but a poor conſolation to the ſurvivors, on either ſide, to be able to ſay, *you*

the

the government, who "*refuſed* and *reſiſted* redreſs," are anſwerable—or *you*, *the people*, who improperly, as to time, or manner, or extent of what you called Redreſs, *demanded* it—*you*—*you* will be anſwerable, "to poſterity, to your country, and to God, for all the crimes and calamities that have followed!"* Let us, if we can, avert the impending calamities. Let no party *contribute to bring them on*—merely, becauſe they *may* afterwards defend themſelves in a ſchool of metaphyſicians. The conduct of us all muſt be defended before man and his Maker. We muſt anſwer for it, according to *our view of probabilities*, and the caution we exerciſe, and the pains we take, to obtain of thoſe probabilities, a view both *juſt* and *comprehenſive*.

* See reſolutions of the Friends of Parliamentary Reform in Belfaſt; in which is the following paſſage, marked as here given:

"We have reſolved, that whatever may be the reſult of the preſent criſis, we ſhall be blameleſs: And that neither our rulers nor our fellow-ſubjects, ſhall have cauſe to accuſe us either of *intemperance* or *remiſſneſs*. But we muſt at the ſame time ſolemnly declare, that, if the juſt demands of the people be deſpiſed, thoſe who *refuſe* and thoſe who *reſiſt* redreſs, will be anſwerable to poſterity, to their country, and to God, for all the crimes and calamities that may follow."

The

The late Ulſter Convention was called under no very happy omens. Summoned, originally, under a recommendation in "moſt queſtionable ſhape,"—one that ſeemed to many no "ſpirit of health," nor meſſenger of peace,* promoted, afterwards by ſomething not very unlike manœuvre,† confeſſed,

* The addreſs of the UNITED IRISHMEN *of* DUBLIN to THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND, beginning, "*Citizen Soldiers,*" and containing among other things not to be paſſed by, this apoſtrophe: "We have thought it OUR *duty* to "*ſpeak:*—ANSWER *us by* ACTIONS;—you have taken TIME "*for conſideration.* Fourteen long years are elapſed ſince "the riſe of your aſſociations; and in 1782, did you imagine "that in 1792, this nation would ſtill remain UNREPRE-"SENTED? &c." So that, it ſeems, this nation has *no* repreſentation, not even an *inadequate* one! *Numerically*, it may not;—but the queſtion is, whether or not it *has* one, and *how far* it has one, *politically*, or in *neceſſary political conſequence and effect:* a point which the people are called on well to conſider, before, *(à la Françaiſe)* they call their Citizen Soldiers into *action.*

† The Belfaſt Committee of twenty-one, appointed to correſpond, in order to procure Provincial Conventions, in their circular letter, publiſhed in the Northern Star on the 2d of January laſt, apologize for appointing a day, and at ſo ſhort a notice; for the county of Antrim Meeting

confeſſed, it ſhould ſeem, by ſome of its warmeſt advocates, to be premature—and attended by many,

ing at Ballymena—but "they truſt that the *neceſſity* will be "deemed a ſufficient excuſe, "*their brethren of Londonderry* "*having propoſed* the 15th of February to be the day on "which the Provincial Convention ſhould be convened at "Dungannon; and, *not wiſhing* to throw *any obſtacle* in the "way, or *to counteract them*, (their brethren of Derry) in "the ſmalleſt degree, but, on the contrary, anxious to *coin-*"*cide* with them, and to *preſerve* their UNION, &c."—theſe gentlemen call together the county of Antrim: And a number of the ſame gentlemen, aſſembled at the meeting they called at Ballymena, on the 14th of January, choſe their Delegates to repreſent them at Dungannon, on the 15th of February, "the day *mentioned*," ſay they, "by *the inhabitants of Derry*."

Now, *after all theſe public aſſertions*, it will ſeem extraordinary, that, *in fact*, the inhabitants of Derry had *not* then called, or even recommended, a Dungannon Meeting;—that, on the contrary, on the 21ſt of December preceding, they had not reſolved any thing on that meaſure; but had called a meeting of their three adjoining counties to Derry, for the 25th of January following, in order *then* to determine what circumſtances might require; and that, previous to the meeting of Belfaſt on the 26th of December, and to the publication of the above letter of the Belfaſt Committee, one of the moſt zealous members of that committee had in his poſſeſſion, a copy of the Derry Reſolutions of the 21ſt of December, in which

many, I do believe, rather in the hope of preventing ſome ill, than the expectation of atchieving much good—if it had ended as our ſplendid preface * ſeems to promiſe, and had proved itſelf the manly and legitimate offspring of *eighty-two*, I ſhould have joined, with all my ſoul, in a Political Thankſgiving, nay, ſhould

which a Dungannon meeting *was not even mentioned.* I can ſcarce ſuppoſe that the committee did not ſee theſe reſolutions of Derry, or had not been informed of them, by ſome other means. I may miſapprehend this matter perhaps—but if I do not, I muſt obſerve; that though, undoubtedly, *the Saints* ſhould have the privilege of diſpenſing occaſionally with the rules of vulgar morality, *for the public good*—yet a frequent or indiſcriminate uſe of this high prerogative, might be the occaſion of *ſcandal*, or might be *thought* to give a bad example to *the ungodly*.

" * DUNGANNON MEETING, FIFTEENTH FEBRUARY, 1793.——We, the Delegates of the Province of ULSTER, appointed at ſeparate meetings, aſſembled at DUNGANNON, on the anniverſary of that day which firſt freed IRELAND from foreign legiſlation; being fully acquainted with the ſentiments of our particular diſtricts, declare the ſenſe of *the people*, in the following terms :"

I ventured at the cloſe of the meeting, when this *preface* was moved, to adviſe againſt it, and to beg gentlemen would conſider the maxim—" *Non fumum ex fulgore*, &c." But, by this time, it had heen circulated, that I was a ſort of an unhappy *ariſtocrate*, or a *diſaffected*, or a *malignant*, &c. &c.

have addreſſed (I ſpeak not irreverently) a *Te Deum*, even to Chance and to Nonſenſe. Perhaps I am myſelf as yet in ſome deluſion, and this meeting may produce more than it promiſes. If nothing but what is conceived in wiſdom were ever crowned with ſucceſs, Heaven help mankind! For me, I ſhall cordially thank the man who proves me in error, and had rather be confuted by *the event*, than paſs for the Seer or Sage of Ulſter. In the mean time, the *conſequences* being yet in the womb of futurity—I have to do only with the proceedings themſelves, and the ſpirit ſhewn, as I think, at the meeting. And as I may here be conceived to take more than a becoming liberty with the conduct of the Committee appointed to prepare the buſineſs for the Convention, I beg it may be underſtood, that, in the Committee, I ſaw ſeveral gentlemen deſervedly of the higheſt character for integrity, and of very conſiderable natural and cultivated ability. To ſome of theſe gentlemen, if taken ſeparately, and in moments of undiſturbed reflection, I believe the whole buſineſs of the meeting might, much for our credit, have been truſted.—But it has been often obſerved, that the wiſdom ſhewn by a body of men, does not always bear a juſt proportion to that of even the majority of individuals who compoſe it; and if (as I think

ſomebody

ſomebody has ſaid) three hundred *Newtons* and *Lockes* thrown into one aſſembly, might act there as ſo many drivelers and blockheads, it is not clearly a miracle, that thirty of *us*, *Solons* and *Lycurguſes* of baronies and pariſhes—ſhould not produce or tack together, in leſs than a day, and amidſt the miſunderſtandings and confuſions of debate, a code of laws truly imperial, commanding preſent reſpect, and likely to ſtand the teſt of time. For my part, though I do not profeſs myſelf a perfect Solomon, I own I loſt occaſionally, and without afterwards recovering it perfectly, much of my own great wiſdom: other gentlemen know beſt what happened to themſelves.

The acceptance of the Delegation made it my duty to think of a plan of proceedings to be propoſed to the Convention; and, knowing myſelf not abſolutely infallible, and entertaining the *antiquated*, and perhaps *ariſtocratic* idea, that ſo long as we *have* a Parliament, the Friends of the People, in and out of it, ſhould, wherever poſſible, conſult and co-operate, I made it my buſineſs to get a little advice from two gentlemen who appeared (if any men in the kingdom could) above all exception, and intereſted not merely in

the welfare, but the glory of their country.* Unluckily their time was so much employed, that hints were almost all I could get from them, and I was obliged to trust too much to myself: but,

* Mr. Grattan and Mr. Forbes. Having, perhaps imprudently, mentioned the names of these gentlemen in the Committee, and taking now the liberty of doing so to the public, I think it my duty to say; that, in respect to this publication of mine, whatever be its demerits, either in design or execution, *they*, (and indeed all persons with whom I have any political connection) are *utterly innocent*. I might certainly have had the advice of those gentlemen on it; but following, and determined to follow, my own strong opinions and feelings on the occasion, and chusing that, if I happened to commit any great error, *the public* should not suffer in this way, at least, of having imputation or suspicion thrown on men supporting a high public character, I resolved that the *hazards* should be *all my own*. This conduct I felt the more necessary, as some opinions of mine, in a hasty letter to Belfast, advising against the call of an Ulster Convention, at least in the *then* state of the public mind, were strangely misunderstood, and of course misrepresented, by the few who saw it; and the supposed heresies and false doctrines of it, were very publicly imputed not only to *me*, the only criminal, but to a most respectable and truly independent society, of which I have the honour to be a member—I mean the Friends of the Constitution, Liberty and Peace. The letter so misunderstood I have now in my possession, through the favour of the gentleman to whom it was addressed, and am ready to shew it to any gentleman, whose curiosity may be of the kind deserving or proper to be gratified.

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had it been otherwiſe, and had I been enabled to ſay, " theſe are not my propoſitions, but thoſe of your friends——in Parliament;" I fear they would only have been thence the more mal-treated and abuſed, and the unfortunate propoſer, only the more *joſtled and huſtled*, as an ariſtocratic emiſſary. For your democratic leaders of the preſent day, poſſeſſing the throne, and reigning in right of *the people*, are apt to entertain a moſt laudable jealouſy not only of all diviſion of their empire, which might be ſenſible, but of all interference by way of advice, which, with due ſubmiſſion, ſeems rather nonſenſe.——Whether it be, that ſome of thoſe gentlemen know themſelves to be *deſpots*, and therefore bear nothing near them in the form of a *brother democrate*,* or that they feel themſelves to be *pretenders* or *uſurpers*, and that the approach of any thing like common-ſenſe or common honeſty, looks like an attack upon *their title*, it is not for me to determine. But whatever be the cauſe, the fact is certain; that *ſome* of theſe gentlemen have long ſince laid down this maxim, " We will have *no leader;*" and they tell the people, I ſuppoſe, whom *they* lead, the ſame thing—and the people believe them!—

* " Bear, like the Turk, no brother near his throne."

POPE.

Now,

Now, all this might be very right, if the people were *all in all*, if our conſtitution were, in ſhort, a *perfect* democracy; but as that is not yet the caſe, (whatever it ought to be) as Parliament is ſtill *ſomething* in our conſtitution, and members of Parliament have ſtill ſome power, and are able, at times, if willing, to communicate ſome little information, were it only as to *the expedient*, and the *practicable* and the *beſt and readieſt means* of accompliſhing a popular purpoſe,—I hold that theſe gentlemen-leaders are not wiſe (unleſs their only object be to raiſe a commotion, and to ſerve *themſelves*) in rejecting, with ſo much indignation, *all* connection with the *ſoi-diſant repreſentatives* of the people, and with thoſe, in particular, who have proved themſelves the friends of reform. I know not how, unleſs by ſome infection from opinions of this kind, to account for a pious *lecture* or gentle *admonition*, which I received from a worthy Chriſtian Divine of the Committee, for giving them "information at *ſecond-hand*," which could not poſſibly have been given to them at firſt-hand, and the *truth* of which I believe no man doubted. I had thought I was doing no more than my duty to the Committee, and to the cauſe of the people, in which we were all engaged—to communicate to the *delegates* of the people, what certain

tain of their *parliamentary* friends *conceived* to have injured, or to be likely to ſerve, the cauſe. —" *Stultus ego putavi!*"

But I committed a ſtill more unpardonable fault than that of imparting facts to the Committee: I gave them *my own opinion* of certain other facts within their own knowledge. In explaining the object of my propoſitions, I had, with a candour not very uſual, I apprehend, in either politicians or impoſtors, made ſome remarks on the principles, tendency, and probable effects of *certain publications*, which had been diſſeminated among the people, and, among the reſt, I mentioned a late addreſs from the town of Belfaſt.

" Ex illo fluere, ac retro ſublapſa referri
" Spes ——! fractæ vires—averſa deæ mens!
" *Nec dubiis*, ea ſigna dedit TRITONIA *monſtris*."

From that unlucky moment, the preſiding divinity of Dungannon could ſcarce himſelf have ſaved me. Pallas, offended Pallas, took ſo many unexpected ſhapes—of the orator and the reaſoner, *the moderate*, and the *enragé*—ſhe ſpoke, too, ſo many languages, in their gradations, from that kind of violence which a gentleman deſpiſes,

to

to that inſinuation which a man cannot well meet, becauſe it meets not him—that, unprepared as I was for ſuch a reception, unconſcious, if ever man was, of deſerving it, and not immediately conceiving the cauſes (either thoſe mentioned, or others which I have ſince diſcovered) I found myſelf, after ſome debate, approaching at times to altercation, obliged to yield to the current, and to content myſelf, as ſome others did from the beginning, with the mere endeavour (however in itſelf diſagreeable and diſguſting) to palliate errors not to be prevented; in which attempt, modeſt as it ſeems, I found myſelf expoſed to miſconception and prejudice.

I now ſubjoin the reſolutions which I propoſed, and thoſe adopted by the Convention, in one view, and contraſted to each other for the more eaſy compariſon, as well as their different nature and tendency will permit. Their ſecond and third reſolutions are, for that purpoſe, tranſpoſed. The numbers, however, ſhew the original order. —The emphatic words in the Convention reſolutions are given, as publiſhed in the Belfaſt Newsletter by Mr. Henry Joy, who having acted, after the call of the meeting, in the different capacities of Delegate, Committee-man, Secretary, Printer, and Hiſtoriographer, to the Convention, muſt

muſt know, if any man can, the ſenſe of the reſolutions intended to be inforced on the public mind. By that ſenſe, I ſhall try them; though, in fact, it but confirms and points the unequivocal meaning of the words. By my propoſitions too let me be tried—behold whether they be the propoſitions of a traitor, or no!

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

1. Reſolved, That we are cordially attached to THE FORM and ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES of the Britiſh Conſtitution; as uniting the advantages, and tempering the defects, of the three ſimple modes of government, *monarchy*—*ariſtocracy*—and *democracy*.

3. That we highly diſapprove of REPUBLICAN FORMS OF GOVERNMENT, as applied to this kingdom; and we reject with abhorrence thoſe principles which have a tendency to diſſolve all government, and deſtroy every wiſe and ſalutary diſtinction in ſociety.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

1. That, from education, habit and conviction, we are warmly attached to the principles and form of *the Britiſh Conſtitution*, as uniting the advantages, and tempering the defects, of the three ſimple modes of Government—Monarchy, Ariſtocracy and Democracy, pure or repreſentative.——We are attached to this our *rightful* Conſtitution, for reaſons numerous and weighty. Becauſe we have felt, nor do we think there is a ſingle deſcription of men in this iſland that has not felt, many and enviable bleſſings, derived even from its imperfect, and defaced, and abuſed copy—our *actual* Conſtitution. Becauſe, as far as our obſervations on hiſtory, and on the extraordinary tranſactions of our own times, have extended, we think we have the ſtrong evidence of FACTS for *the opinion*—that no Government ever yet exiſted, that no Government, tried by the great ſearcher, *time*, now exiſts, leſs tending to decay, corruption, or convulſion, or poſſeſſing more the native power of eaſy ſelf-renovation and progreſſive improvement;—none ſo accommodating itſelf to, yet ſo well regulating, the ever-varying and ever-reſtleſs deſires of man;—none ſo certainly rewarding induſtry and integrity, ſo powerfully animating talent, ſo uſefully reſtraining the power and the pride of wealth, rendering

2. That we view with the warmeſt affection and gratitude, the paternal regard of our Sovereign, to the loyal ſubjects of this kingdom: manifeſted in his directing the attention of Parliament, to the depreſſed circumſtances of the *Roman Catholics of Ireland*, and his recommending the adoption of ſuch meaſures as may unite all orders of the people, in their attachment to the Conſtitution.

4. That

vice ſo little hurtful, folly ſo perfectly innocent, and ambition not only ſo harmleſs but a virtue; —no Government, in fine, ſo poſſeſſing itſelf in *ſtability and vigour*, nor extending to *the great body of the people* ſo much true liberty, ſo perfect, ſo proud an independence, ſo much affluence, peace and happineſs.

2. That we are bound by affection and intereſt to our confederated brethren of Great Britain, and to that illuſtrious houſe, which, deriving the crown of theſe kingdoms from the *gift* of the people, muſt cheriſh a ſenſe of the *tenure*, and remain attached to the *duties*, by which that crown is held and dignified: Nor do we feel leſs perſonal gratitude to our preſent beloved Sovereign, to whoſe paternal diſpoſition and attention, the conſtitution and the people of this country are more indebted, than, perhaps, to the whole line of his Majeſties royal predeceſſors.

3. That though we are thus attached to our Conſtitution, to the family and perſon of our Sovereign, and to our brethren and friends of Great Britain, we are thence but the more feelingly alive to, and the more determined, by all

lawful

4. That it is the conſtitutional right of the people, and eſſential to *the very being* of their liberty, to be FULLY and FAIRLY repreſented in their own Houſe of Parliament.

5. That *the preſent ſtate of the repreſentation*, in the Houſe of Commons is *partial* and *inadequate*, ſubverſive of the rights of the people, and—AN INTOLERABLE GRIEVANCE.

6. That it appears to us, that ſeveral LORDS, ſpiritual and temporal, as well as COMMONERS, direct the return of more than TWO HUNDRED members of the Iriſh Houſe of Commons, leaving not *one-third* of the repreſentation to *the people*.

7. That it is the opinion of this meeting, that all boroughs ſhould be disfranchiſed, and repreſentation eſtabliſhed on FAIR and RATIONAL principles, by extending the Elective Franchiſe equal-

lawful means, to purſue the redreſs of, THE PECULIAR GRIEVANCES OF OUR COUNTRY, thoſe which are THE SOURCE OF ALL THE REST.

RESOLVED THEREFORE.

4. That the preſent ſtate of the Repreſentation of the People in the Houſe of Commons is *inadequate*, and A GRIEVANCE.

ly to perſons of every religious perſuaſion, by elections frequently repeated, and by a diſtribution of repreſentatives, proportioned to the *population* and *wealth* of the country.

8. That we have ſeen with ſatisfaction the Houſe of Commons *pledge* themſelves to an immediate and fair enquiry into the ſtate of the repreſentation; and we conjure them, as they regard their own *faith* and *honour*, the ſafety of our invaluable Conſtitution, and the reſtoration of the public mind to compoſure and confidence, to perſevere in ſuch enquiry with zeal and ſteadineſs; in order that a complete and radical reform may be ſpeedily effectuated.

9. That deeming a complete Parliamentary Reform eſſential to the *peace, liberty and happineſs of the people*, we do moſt ſolemnly pledge ourſelves to each other, and to our country, that we will never abandon the purſuit of this important object, but zealouſly and ſteadily perſevere, until *a full* and *fair* repreſentation of the people ſhall be unequivocally obtained.

10. That

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

10. That we conſider the immediate and entire emancipation of the Roman Catholics as a meaſure indiſpenſably neceſſary to the ſafety and happineſs of this country.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

5. That the influence of the minister, from the number of places and pensions dispensed to members of the House of Commons is become excessive, and is—A GRIEVANCE.

6. That the Penal Laws against Catholics, having *almost* deprived our people of a country, and our country, of course, of a people, leave this island exposed to all the machinations, dangers and desolation possible to be apprehended from ministerial tyranny, from popular discontent, and from foreign invasion, and have been, and are at this moment —A GRIEVANCE.

7. RESOLVED, That, in consequence of the above grievances, the people of this kingdom do not enjoy the benefits and privileges intended by the Constitution, nor that opinion and sense of security which are essentially necessary to the existence and enjoyment of liberty.

8. That, in order to redress the said grievances, the abolition of the Penal Laws against Catholics, and a radical and effectual Reform of the Re-

 presentation

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

11. That

preſentation of the People in Parliament, are INDISPENSABLY NECESSARY.

9. That we think too highly of the power and reſources of a people, at once united, determined and wiſe, not to believe, and believing, we think it neceſſary, at this peculiar criſis, to DECLARE, that this nation is far indeed from being reduced to the deſperate alternative, of *unlimited ſubmiſſion* or *anarchy and war*. We think that a redreſs of theſe grievances may be obtained, and that ſpeedily, *by means equally peaceable and ſafe*—by means, which levy no war, which threaten no commotion, which offer not even a conſtructive violence to authority; [and from which, if war *could* ariſe, it would be the open, undiſguiſed, and unprovoked war of *a miniſter*, or *a cabal*, *againſt* THE PEOPLE—a war which would unite all hearts, and raiſe every arm, in favour of freedom—a war to which mercenaries would be unequal, under which treaſuries would ſink, and in which conqueſt itſelf would, to the ſurviving deſpots, be ruin.]*—The means, we think, are theſe;—addreſſes to the People, petitions to his Majeſty and Parliament, framed by ſuch meetings as may appear beſt qualified to explain, and procure at-

* See letter III.

tention

11. That a power be veſted in a Committee, conſiſting of thirty perſons, for the purpoſe of re-convoking this aſſembly, (as occaſion may ariſe) until the conſtituent body is pleaſed to return another repreſentation of the province. AND THAT, on a recommendation by letter, addreſſed to William Sharman, Eſq; at Moira, and ſigned by

tention to, public grievances;—and by aſſociations of the people, uſing that *private* and *perſonal* liberty which the law cannot, without ceaſing to be law, deny them—the liberty of chuſing what *commodities* they ſhall individually conſume, what deſcription of *perſons* they ſhall, on certain occaſions in the commerce of life, individually employ, encourage, and hold intercourſe with, and what ſupport they ſhall, by their habits of expence, contribute to *the revenue*, or to *the current expences of adminiſtration.*

10. That a petition, from freeholders attending this meeting, be preſented to the Houſe of Commons, expreſſing our earneſt wiſhes, that the Houſe, in its wiſdom, will effectually redreſs the ſame, by granting to the Catholics equal liberty with Proteſtants, and by giving to the nation a Reform in Parliament.

11. That this meeting be adjourned to the day of next

by ſeven members of the Committee, he ſhall, by circular letter to the reſt, procure the ſenſe of a majority; and if the meaſure of a *provincial* meeting be by them approved of, he ſhall forthwith iſſue a ſummons, in the name of the Committee, for that purpoſe.

[Here followed the names of the Committee.]

12. That the above-named Committee be authorized to communicate with the other provinces of this kingdom, at this important criſis, and to concert proper means of calling a *National Convention*, at a future day, ſhould circumſtances render ſuch a meeting unavoidably neceſſary.

13. Reſolved, that we behold with indignation, an intention of embodying a MILITIA in this kingdom; a meaſure which can only have *miniſterial influence* for its object; which we deem *burdenſome*, and totally *unneceſſary*.

14. That feeling our obligations to our brave, and diſintereſted protectors, THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND—we cheerfully embrace the opportunity

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

tunity of returning them our warmeſt acknowledgments. We moſt earneſtly exhort them, to perſevere in that line of conduct which has procured them the thanks and confidence of the nation. We truſt that they will increaſe their numbers; improve their diſcipline; and long continue the unbought defenders of the *peace*, *liberty* and *conſtitution* of their country.

After the Chairman had left the chair, a few only of the Delegates having *choſen* to leave the houſe, the following reſolution was entered into, and publiſhed *ſeparately:*

At a numerous meeting of gentlemen, inhabitants of the counties of Antrim, Monaghan, Tyrone, Down, Derry, Donegall and Carrickfergus, held at Dungannon the 16th February, 1793.

Reſolved *unanimouſly*, That it is with infinite concern we behold this kingdom likely to be involved in the horrors and expences of *a foreign war*; a war by which, as a nation, we can gain nothing; but, on the contrary, *muſt* expoſe our commerce to depredation, and our country to unprovoked hoſtility.

LETTER II.

I MENTIONED that I explained my propoſitions to the Committee; indeed I did explain their whole ſcope and object, and that of each propoſition in particular, perhaps too clearly, certainly with more than political candour. When the Mr. Joy I have mentioned, (whom, in return for the favour of acquainting me with my delegation by letter, leſt I ſhould not hear of it as ſoon from thoſe who appointed me, I had informed that I ſhould attend the meeting) came to read *his* propoſitions, he announced himſelf by obſerving, that "he *had expected* ſome to be *too milky*, and others too extravagant or violent;—and *he had not been diſappointed.*" By the too milky, in other words, *ſpiritleſs* propoſitions, Mr. Joy did not deny that he meant to deſcribe *mine*. Now, Mr. Joy, for ſome time paſt, and till very lately indeed, had been what is called, diſcredited, in his own *warm* country, as *a moderate*—one profoundly reſpecting the wiſdom and juſtice of Parliament, and leaving, as I recollect, *all* to that wiſdom and juſtice, in *certain* points, though perhaps, in others, he was

willing enough to aſſiſt them with a little of his own. It has even been ſaid, I cannot affirm how truly, that his newſpaper alſo had been a little diſcredited; and that a new planet (but, 'tis ſaid, no *Georgium Sidus*) "the Northern Star," whoſe directors, or preſiding ſpirits, had the honour of a little notice lately from our political Herſchel, vulgarly called the Attorney General, had been *eclipſing* ſomewhat the good old, ſteady, cautious light of *his* eſtabliſhed, regularly-moving luminary, *the News-letter*. The attack, therefore, of a gentleman of this deſcription, one ſo very moderate, and ſo very cautious, and ſuppoſed to know ſo well, upon every occaſion, what ſubjects, and perſons, he made obſervations on, was, I confeſs, unexpected, and, judging by ſome of its probable effects, I might, perhaps, call it alarming. When accuſed by *him* of a want of political ſpirit, what muſt the high-flying conceive of me?—No leſs, ſurely, than "*Hunc tu, Romane, caveto.*"—I was the more ſurpriſed, as I really thought I had gone, in all conſcience, far enough, in ſeaſoning, with certain political pepper, parts of my propoſitions which ſeemed to require it, leſt the temperance, and ſlower mode of proceeding, recommended, ſhould be miſtaken by the people for diſaffection, coldneſs, or timidity. I thought at the moment, and ſtill think, that I had gone farther alſo in

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real ſtrength of meaſures, than Mr. Joy himſelf: —but I found afterwards that, if I had gone farther in ſome reſpects, I had fallen ſhort of him, as I wiſh to do, in others.

The firſt reſolution of the Convention goes to attachment to the *Britiſh conſtitution*.—For adopting on this point, and for promulgating, if one may ſay ſo, to the people, the moſt explicit, the ſtrongeſt, and the warmeſt declarations that truth could warrant, I thought I had given reaſons more than ſufficient:—from the fears entertained by many, even of the old and ſteady friends of reform, that ſome of the modern and younger reformers in the North, wiſhed for a *revolution*; from the *almoſt unqualified diſſatisfaction* which certain publications had tended to diſſeminate, with reſpect even to the theory and principles of our Conſtitution; which diſſatisfaction, if permitted to ſpread and take root in the minds of the people, might be attended with conſequences moſt ſerious; and, as I recollect, from the poſſibility, that if we appeared ſo much diſſatisfied with our condition, the French, with whom we were at war, might think of offering us *their protection*, and their aſſiſtance in *reforming* our Conſtitution, as they had done to *Belgium*. After all theſe reaſons, of which I only pretend to give the ſubſtance,

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not the very expreſſions, and, to which I did not hear, as I recollect, a ſingle anſwer even attempted, it did not mortify, but I confeſs it ſurpriſed me, to hear it propoſed, by a worthy, but, I think, much too zealous delegate from Belfaſt, that we ſhould adopt a propoſition, from another gentleman which profeſſed that good-ſort-of common-place, ' *cut-and-dry*" attachment to the Conſtitution, (conſiſting, to be ſure, of King, Lords, and Commons) which one might grind out of any *reſolution-mill*; which, in fact, has been ſo often repeated, that, if it ſtand by itſelf, it paſſes, like ſome of our oaths, for words of courſe, and which King James, ſo pleaſantly found the *value* of, when he carried with him " the lives and fortunes of *all his Majeſty's loyal ſubjects of Great Britain*,"—on *his abdication-voyage*. The propoſal was acceded to;—oppoſition from me, if not then indelicate, would have been ineffectual. My propoſition on the Conſtitution appeared rejected, I might ſay ſcouted. The *reaſons* offered by it for preferring this Conſtitution, appeared rejected *in toto*, without diſcuſſion, without any propoſal to ſhorten, or to modify, or to change them, ſo as to meet more perfectly the ſentiments of the Committee. Notwithſtanding this diſcouragement, however, as I ſaw the defects of the propoſition moved, I moved the firſt part of my propoſition (the only

only part which there appeared a poſſibility of carrying) as an amendment, and, the remainder of the original propoſition appearing afterwards either unneceſſary or incompatible with the amendment, the latter was, after a good deal of debate, adopted, with the alterations which appear from a compariſon of the firſt Convention reſolution with that which I propoſed. Againſt declaring that we were "from *education*, *habit* and *conviction*," attached to the principles of the Conſtitution, I recollect no reaſon given; nor do I readily conceive any that could be given; unleſs one ſimilar to Lord Hamlet's, on the obſervation of "the ſatirical ſlave—that old men had grey beards, &c."—"All which, Sir,—though I moſt powerfully and potently *believe*, yet I hold it not *honeſty* to have it ſo ſet down." On perhaps a like principle, it was thought improper to declare a preference of our Conſtitution to a Democracy, "*pure or repreſentative*."—The word democracy, no doubt, includes all kinds of democracy; but I had thought there could be no harm in including, expreſsly, a *repreſentative* one, when part of the country was ſuſpected of a tendency to French principles, and when a viſit to this kingdom from the French themſelves, appeared not quite an improbability, if they received ever ſo little encouragement, and could command or ſteal a

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paſſage to us. Gentlemen were cautious in another particular. They choſe to declare attachment, not ſimply to the *principles*, but " the *original* principles," of the Britiſh Conſtitution; as if its principles are not either the *ſame* they ever were, from the time when the Conſtitution can be ſaid to have been really formed, or, if not the ſame, were not, in fact, *improved* or *meliorated*, by the executive power becoming more dependant on the legiſlature for revenue, " by the gradual improvement of arts, and the correſpondent progreſs of manners,"* by

* " The abuſes of the executive power, which were ſo " frequent in the early periods of the Engliſh Conſtitution, " have ſince been removed by the gradual improvement of " arts, and the correſpondent progreſs of manners, without " any conſiderable change in the diſtribution of the great " powers of government. The *outlines* of the Engliſh Con- " ſtitution are not very different, at this day, from what they " were, in the reign of William the Conqueror; but the pow- " ers which were then univerſally acknowledged, have been " ſince more minutely applied to the detail of adminiſtration; " and the variations that have occurred in the modes of living, " and in the condition of individuals, have been gradually ac- " commodated to the ſpirit of the old inſtitution. The *expe-* " *rience of the nation* has led them to fill up the picture, of " which a *rude ſketch* was delineated in that early period."

I am happy to owe this authority, for the opinions I had entertained (without recollecting exactly whence I had got them)

by the conſequent and naturally progreſſive power and wiſdom of the Britiſh *democracy*, and by that happy, but perhaps ſomewhat accidental *union of intereſt* among the *whole people* of England, nobles, clergy and commons, which aroſe from the very defects, at leaſt the occaſional defects, of their Conſtitution, and from the occaſional tyranny and folly of their Kings. The change, however, made by this amendment of my propoſition, I conſidered at the time as only making the reſolution a little leſs juſt. I am now unfortunate enough to conſider it as a little fooliſh

them) to Mr. Millar, Profeſſor of Law in the Univerſity of Glaſgow, the truly Philoſophical Hiſtorian of the Engliſh Government, (See his Hiſtorical View, book ii. chap. ii.) whoſe lectures I have had the pleaſure of hearing; and I have only to regret, that my induſtry in purſuing, has ſo little correſponded with his ability in pointing out and illuſtrating, the grand outlines of general and national law. As to the idea itſelf, of there having exiſted an *original* and *ancient Conſtitution* in England, a *perfect model*, in principles and form, all deviations from which are to be conſidered as *corruptions*, and to which the actual Conſtitution muſt be *reſtored*, before the ſtate can be found, it ſeems too unphiloſophic, and too abſurd, to be ſeriouſly entertained by any man who can think, and uſes his judgment. *Pallas* might have ſprung, full-armed, from the head of *Jove*; but *perfect wiſdom* never yet ſprung, nor will it ever ſpring, though maturing to eternity, from the brain of *man*.

or ſo; and as, beſides, tending to make the people believe that greater reſtorations, or changes, in our exiſting Conſtitution are neceſſary, than either the fact or political prudence is likely to warrant. But from the manner in which the amendment to my amendment was moved, we had a narrow eſcape of doing ſtill worſe, in approving (by implication, excluſively) the *original form*, as well as original *principles*, of the Britiſh Conſtitution; which might have furniſhed our political antiquarians with ſome excellent opportunities for diſplay, in diſcovering *what* that form was,—*wherein* it differed from, and was preferable to, the *preſent*,—*when*, particularly, it *exiſted*, and *ceaſed* to exiſt, &c. &c. or it might have rendered our attachment to the preſent, and no doubt, degenerate form, and conſequently our loyalty itſelf, (Heaven bleſs us!) problematical.

When this debate was ended, it would have entertained a man not too ſerious in the buſineſs, to have ſeen one or two honeſt good Gentlemen-Delegates look over at me, who had propoſed and carried the principal amendment, and expreſs to each other ſomething like ſurpriſe, and even indignation, that we ſhould have been "ſo long employed in doing *ſo little!*" It ſignified little (if I might preſume to interpret the meaning of theſe

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honeſt gentlemen) how we *expreſſed* ourſelves, provided our meaning was underſtood;—one ſet of words was as good, for that purpoſe, as another;—and a word or two more or leſs, or the change of the place of a word or two, could be of no manner of conſequence. A diſſertation on *the uſe of language* would, to be ſure, be a pleaſant thing, in a political Convention; and the decalogue might as well run, (as in the fine gentleman's bible) "Thou *ſhalt* commit adultery," as "thou ſhalt *not*." We were ſending forth our "Tables of the Law," and all the people were to ſay "*Amen*," and the legiſlature itſelf was to bow down before us, or before the divinity whom we *declared* unto them;—yet did ſome of ourſelves (the choſen law-givers and prophets) think it a waſte of time, that we ſhould deliberate an hour or two on the *Conſtitution*, or on the words and manner in which we ſhould praiſe or promulgate it!—O Phocion!—firſt, almoſt, among the heroes of Greece! through life, in every extremity, her general, her counſellor, and her friend! —was it miſanthropy, in *thee*, or was it contempt of the people, or was it pride, or what bad paſſion inſpired thy ſatire, when, being applauded once in a public aſſembly, thy queſtion was, to a friend—"have I not let fall, I pray thee, *ſome piece of folly?*"

But to return;—gentlemen, for ſome good reaſon or other, did not chuſe to ſay all they might, either for the Britiſh Conſtitution, or our own. However, as certain " infamous miſrepreſentations and miniſterial lies" had gone abroad (I had told the Committee, I think, as much as that I feared there was a little truth in ſome of theſe ſame lies; or that the public, at leaſt, had reaſon to think there was);—as it had been *ſaid*, that there was ſomething of a diſpoſition to republican principles in many of our people in the North—they were reſolved they would put malice completely out of countenance, and leſt any critic ſhould ſay our reſolution in favour of the Conſtitution was a weak one, and did not ſufficiently ſupport our crazy old *Gothic Pile*, they built up againſt it a goodly broad-baſed *buttreſs*, in ſhape of a *denunciation* of " republican forms of government." This truly they did—but was it againſt ſuch forms *as bad in themſelves*, or, as in themſelves, *more defective* than our form of government?—" Ah, no!"—Thoſe forms are only diſapproved, " as *applied to this kingdom*."—And when the circumſtances of the kingdom *change* but a little, then every ſenſible politician muſt own, that the *preſent inexpediency* of applying ſuch a form may change alſo—may become, indeed, *expediency*. " Nothing human," as was well

well obſerved by a gentleman of the Committee, " is unalterable. Therefore we cannot be, nor " ſhould we declare ourſelves, *unalterably attached* " to our Conſtitution." A French army, with the Tree of Liberty *might* alter our attachment;—even the *delay* of a reform by Parliament *might* alter it;—a thouſand other circumſtances, not yet conceived, *might* alter it;—and, much as we are attached to our Conſtitution, we may ſoon, and conſiſtently with, nay, under almoſt the authority of, this very reſolution, think, and declare, the very reverſe of what we now do. In the mean time, (or as the French ſay, *en attendant*) the ſhrewdneſs and wit of the Iriſh people (and wit and ſhrewdneſs our people have) is *truſted* with the implied inference of this reſolution;—that republican forms are no great grievance, *in themſelves*; and that we have no occaſion to be *too* well content with the form and principles of the Conſtitution we have, or too unwilling, on any occaſion, to riſk the loſs of it, by looking for, perhaps, a better one.—But it will be ſaid, we obviated that inference in the firſt reſolution. Perhaps we did; if all people would conſider both reſolutions together; which, by the bye, the Convention publication has ſeparated;—if we had done it ſo warmly, too, as that people in general would believe us perfectly ſincere; or,

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if we had given ſome ſuch *reaſons* for our opinion as might at once have been an evidence of our own ſincerity, and an inducement and aſſiſtance to the people to *reconſider* the Conſtitution, and their ſituation under it. " Oh, but all this is being too difficult!—Have we not cured all defects, and left not a loop-hole for doubt, by declaring our abhorrence of thoſe principles which have a tendency to diſſolve *all government*, and deſtroy *every* wiſe and ſalutary diſtinction in ſociety?" Why, this is good; very good;—but it happens, rather unfortunately, that there is not a *ſans-culotte*, nor an aſſaſſin, nor a worſhiper, if there be any worſhiper, at the *pantheon* —(the temple of *all the Gods and Demigods*) in Paris, nor is there a ſingle devotee of the pureſt democracy, Mr. Paine himſelf not excepted, who would ſcruple to declare the ſame. If indeed, we had ſaid *what* theſe principles are, which we conceive to have this horrible tendency, and *where they exiſt*;—if we had *deſcribed* them, ſo that innocent people, going about their own buſineſs, or having more zeal than knowledge in the buſineſs of the ſtate, might know, and mark, and avoid them;—or if we had clearly ſeparated the diſtinctions which, *in our opinion*, are " wiſe and ſalutary" from thoſe which we thought fooliſh and deſtructive, all had been well. We ſhould,

at leaſt, have been underſtood. But thundering, thus, an anathema againſt a *non-entity*, at leaſt againſt principles of which many of us would deny the exiſtence, and which, in fact, cannot exiſt generally in any nation, or under any form of government,—and declining, as ſome of our Committee did, to deſcribe the principles we declared againſt, as "*levelling* principles,"—(a phraſe which "they did not underſtand," even after part of its general meaning had been explained, as including "the deſtruction of our eſtabliſhed *ranks* and *orders*,")—under all theſe circumſtances, I venture to pronounce, that our reſolution, in this part, has either no meaning, or a deceitful one. It pretends much, and does nothing. It ſpeaks only to the ear, or it inſtills poiſon into the heart. It ſays nothing in favour of our own Conſtitution, nor any thing unfavourable to any poſſible Conſtitution which time, chance, or violence can ever eſtabliſh in this nation.

I do not recollect any reaſon given in the Committee for taking no notice of our brethren of Great Britain, our *decided preference* of whom to all others, as a *confederated nation* (I think I may truly call them) I ſhould, at this time moſt particularly, have wiſhed to mark much more pointedly,

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had it not been for adding to the length of propoſitions already, I feared, too long. The reſt of that propoſition relating to the family and perſon of his Majeſty, will, I think, on compariſon with that of the Convention, explain and defend itſelf; even on principles the moſt popular, and on any view of facts which can be taken by diſcontent itſelf. Part of it was borrowed from recollection of ſome late reſolutions of the city or county of Dublin. I have in this propoſition, as publiſhed, marked certain words as emphatic, which I ſhould have thought highly indecorous to do, in a publication perfectly general. But I conſider theſe letters as not only addreſſed to *the people*, by way of defence of myſelf, againſt imputations of I know not what principles or ſpirit hoſtile to their wiſhes or demands, but as aiming alſo at impreſſing on their mind certain opinions, and the conviction of a truth, neceſſary perhaps to prevent their miſtaking friends, and being miſled by enemies, namely, that thoſe who would ſupport their king, may do it, not merely on the principles of perſonal, or what might be called vulgar loyalty, but on thoſe of liberty alſo, and a zealous, and even a proud attachment to the laws.

On the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th reſolutions of the Convention I ſhall hereafter make ſome particular

ticular obſervations, for they ſeem to require it.—At preſent, I ſhall only ſay, that it appeared to me at once more ſuited to the object of this Convention, and more prudent and dignified, not to deſcend into any *detail*, either of grievances or remedies. Let us go ever ſo little into detail, on the queſtion of reform, and it becomes neceſſary to aſcertain facts, and to diſcuſs principles; and the doing of either requires much time and great deliberation. But we were fully prepared to declare, and, from the very ſimplicity of the objects, were likely to produce moſt effect by declaring, the *great*, *general* and *peculiar grievances* of this country, the ſource of all the inferior or particular grievances. Theſe great ones I had accordingly reduced to three heads :—1ſt. The *inadequate* ſtate of repreſentation; proving the neceſſity of what is by ſome called *external reform ;*—or of having the members freely and fairly elected, by a ſufficient number, and proper deſcription of perſons, of the people, chuſing their members alſo for ſuch a period of time as may tend to ſecure to the electors a ſufficient controul over their conduct: 2dly. The *exceſſive influence* of the crown, or miniſter;—proving the neceſſity of *internal* reform, as an additional means of keeping the Houſe of Commons pure, when ſo elected :—3dly. The Catholic Penal Laws; under

which I meant to include all laws making any civil or political diſtinction between Catholic and Proteſtant ſubjects, on account of religion. The two firſt of theſe propoſitions I had drawn from the dictation and hints of the gentlemen I conſulted; nor do I recollect that they made any objection to my mode of conſidering the Catholic Penal Laws, as a third great national grievance. I had indeed deſcribed them, and them only, as "an *intolerable* grievance:" as having produced, and now producing, worſe conſequences to the nation at large, than the other two united. But the preſent proſpects of the Catholics, and of the nation, on that ſubject, and the little neceſſity there ſeemed to be, in this time of ferment, to declare any of our grievances intolerable, made me think it afterwards proper to omit this expreſſion. The Convention paſſed no reſolution on *internal* reform, or againſt the influence of the crown:—Whether this was an important omiſſion or not, in perſons aiming at a reform, "radical and compleat," let others determine.

But, odd as it may ſeem, there was not, as I recollect, a ſingle reſolution, going to the *entire emancipation* of the Catholics, propoſed by any of the gentlemen who were for carrying matters with the higheſt hand; though my propoſition on

on that ſubject might, at leaſt, have given the hint; and though I had mentioned that the ſubject of the Catholics ſeemed to me to require, from its conſequence, a ſeparate reſolution: and, finding the matter likely to be overlooked, I was obliged at laſt, near the cloſe of the buſineſs in the Committee, to draw up haſtily the reſolution adopted, in the wording of which I received ſome aſſiſtance from Mr. Sinclaire.

After declaring the grievances of the country, and the *indiſpenſible neceſſity* of redreſs, and after guarding againſt any poſſible ſuſpicion that our views were diſloyal, or ſeditious, or tending to revolution, or to a ſeparation from England, it appeared to me—(but in this, I confeſs, I followed my own ideas—not having an opportunity of fully conſulting on it the parliamentary gentlemen whom I have mentioned) that a farther meaſure was neceſſary; viz. to declare our confidence in the power and reſources of the people, *if they united, and acted with firmneſs and wiſdom*;—to declare our conviction, that they had it in their *power* to obtain redreſs of their grievances, by means conſtitutional and legal, peaceable and ſafe;—to declare what theſe means are, and, by this declaration, to do two things, each, it ſeemed, of the very laſt importance, in the preſent ſtate and temper of the times;—to incline government to reaſon-

able and handſome *conceſſion*, and to impreſs on the people this ſentiment, that *peace* is equally their intereſt and their duty. Theſe conſtitutional and peaceable means being enumerated in my ninth propoſition, I propoſed in the tenth (with the concurrence, or by advice of the gentlemen I had conſulted) a petition to Parliament; which, in fact, is one of thoſe conſtitutional and peaceable means mentioned in the preceding propoſition, and is of theſe means the firſt, the moſt ordinary, and, if I may ſay ſo, the leaſt coſtly; and, in the eleventh, or laſt propoſition, that the Convention ſhould be adjourned to *a day certain*; when the effect of the petition to Parliament, and of all our other meaſures;—when, in ſhort, the entire ſtate of public affairs, would be farther known; and the wiſdom and ſpirit of the Convention might be exerciſed accordingly.

As to this idea of the peaceable means of redreſs, it is one learned and practiſed, by many of us, in the ſchool,—I will call it, the glorious ſchool, of *eighty-two*—Mr. Grattan himſelf, I may ſay, our maſter. One bloodleſs revolution, or reſtoration, rather, of the Conſtitution, inclines a man who watched its progreſs, and enjoyed its conſummation, to believe, perhaps too eaſily, in another. This belief is of a nature ſo flatter-

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ing to the moſt ordinary philantrophy, that it cannot be reſigned unleſs to the extorted conviction of experience; and I, for one, will cling to it while I can, though it ſhould be ſaid, and ſung, of *us peaceable reformers*, that the years ſince *eighty-two* have taken more from our ſpirit, than they have added to our wiſdom.

The idea is perhaps not ſufficiently underſtood by ſome, or recollected by others: I would beg to recommend it to the ſerious conſideration of thoſe gentlemen, who, if they conceive any *middle line*, or any thing before them but the *alternative*, which I call a deſperate one, of immediate and complete conceſſion, on the part of government, or war, on the part of the people,—have not yet favoured us with a clear explanation of their ſentiments.

The ſtrongeſt of theſe propoſed meaſures (*non-conſumption*, *non-importation* agreements,—what I may call agreements of *interdict*, &c.) ſeems to amount to this; that, ſo far as the agreements extend, the people do by themſelves, what they ſometimes wiſh their repreſentatives to do for them: *They refuſe ſupplies*, *till grievances are redreſſed*; nay, they put it out of the power of their repreſentatives, without their actual individual conſent,

conſent, to grant theſe ſupplies. The meaſure commences, in fact, againſt the miniſter, *a commercial and political war*; whilſt it deprives him of many of the means or reſources of war, either offenſive or defenſive. It is a blockade of the revenue, and cuts off the reſervoir of its citadel,—or ſome of its main pipes and fountains—*conſumption*.——It ſtarves the troops of the caſtle. Theſe have ſeldom the ſpirit of Londonderry of old. They fight neither for laws nor for religion;—and, rather than live upon rats, they will deſert or capitulate. It ſupplies the army of the people, not merely from thoſe able to bear arms: Every man, and every woman, and every infant, that eats, drinks, and is clothed, beyond the *abſolute neceſſities* of nature, and makes but a trifling change of habits in theſe articles, ſubtracts, from that inſtant, from the collections, from the daily ſuſtenance, of the miniſter, and becomes, from that inſtant, the truly unbought ſoldier of the people. This ſubtraction from the ſupplies of the miniſter, is in exact proportion to the former luxury, vanity, and folly, and to the preſent ſelf-denial and reſolute determination of the non-conſumer or aſſociator. Nay, the aſſociator may do more than fight himſelf; he may enliſt, and preſs others into the ſervice, or may at leaſt render them neutral, if he cannot detach them from the poli-

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tical enemy.——He may ceaſe to employ, to encourage, or to hold certain intercourſe with, thoſe who perſiſt in ſupporting the oppoſite line of political conduct. If all this would not have the effect of *coercion*, I cannot conceive what would. If it would not be *legal* coercion—if law *could* make it otherwiſe, "without ceaſing to be law," or without ſoliciting a revolution,—I have hitherto been totally aſtray as to the principles of either law or the conſtitution, and as to all ideas of what a people uſed to liberty, and poſſeſſed of ſenſe and ſpirit, would bear. Ideas of temporary neceſſity or expediency may induce the legiſlature to ſay, that none but certain deſcriptions of the people ſhall be armed; or that the arms they uſe ſhall be of a certain kind, and uſed only on certain occaſions, or for certain purpoſes; but no legiſlature could preſume to ſay to the people,—"Ye ſhall *uſe*, whether ye will or not, our *luxuries*, or we ſhall tax, as we pleaſe, your *neceſſaries*. Ye ſhall ſupport, though ye deteſt us."—Such language will not be held, nor the conduct that would ſpeak ſuch language. The world is taught more wiſdom.—The only queſtion, then, that remains, is this;—will the people perceive the *full power* of ſuch meaſures, and adopt, and perſevere in them, in the face of preſent and immediate difficulties, loſſes, deceptions, temptations,

ons, and threats, perhaps, of power? That they will do ſo, I am unable to anſwer; but I will not ſcruple to ſay;—that, if the people have not the common ſenſe to ſee, and the heart to feel, the ſtrength of ſuch peaceable means of coercion, and the far inferior riſk and expence of them, on every principle of calculation, mercantile, political and humane;—and if they have not that contempt of inferior and temporary gains and ſacrifices, that love of honour, of their country, and of man, and that calm and deliberate and perſevering fortitude, which *may* be neceſſary to the adoption and ſucceſs of ſuch a *civil aſſociation*;—the man who, thinking ſo of them, would adviſe ſuch a people to attempt, or would join them in attempting, an improvement of their Conſtitution, *by a civil war*, can be little better than a deſperate quack, an incorrigible fool, or a ready-handed ruffian. His object muſt be to rear ſome altar to his prurient vanity, ſome throne for his "vaulting ambition," or to glut his neceſſities or avarice with plunder, or his intolerance, or revenge, with perſecution: or, ſhould he be none of *theſe*, he muſt be ſome ignorant and unhappy projector, incapable of weighing facts, or foreſeeing conſequences;—incapable of perceiving *what ſort of a people* he would truſt to, and inflame, and let looſe, to what tyrant paſ-

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ſions, and tyrant leaders, he would give them over,—to what "diſſolution of all the elements of ſafety," to what chances of a univerſal craſh and wreck of happineſs, he would expoſe them, ——confounding, at length, the wiſdom, and hopes, and fortitude of man, and rendering deſpotiſm itſelf, perhaps, the miſerable refuge of deſpair.

Strongly impreſſed with theſe ſentiments, from ſome little experience in the late revolution of our country, and from the *abſolute neceſſity* which I thought I had for ſome time ſeen, of at once oppoſing a *firm mound*, and opening a *ſafe channel*, to popular enthuſiaſm,—it may be conceived that I could not, with perfect coolneſs, ſee not my own ſentiments only, but thoſe I had reaſon to think, of ſome gentlemen in the Committee every way reſpectable (on this occaſion, however, I thought, too acquieſcent, or fearful of contention)—either little attended to, or indignantly overpowered. I could not cooly ſee a ſyſtem of popular ſafety and ſtrength, as I thought it, overborne by what appeared to me one of impotent, yet dangerous violence. I ſaw the conſtitution, I thought, not ſufficiently defended;—the too well-founded ſuſpicions of the political principles and motives of ſome of our reformers, noticed,

ticed, indeed, but left unrefuted;—attachment to our ſovereign, founded on facts very lately occurring, and therefore partial, and, conſtructively, derogatory;—grievances inſiſted on in details, then unneceſſary, and tending to irritate ſtill farther, if not from haſte and inaccuracy, to miſlead the public mind. I ſaw a propoſed declaration of not only the poſſibility, but the means, of a peaceable redreſs of thoſe grievances, ſilently, but intelligibly enough, rejected. ——I ſaw a petition to Parliament,—the firſt in order of thoſe peaceable means,—one too, which appeared natural, if not indiſpenſible, ſo long as Parliament, which alone had the power of giving legal and peaceable redreſs, ſhould permit the people to indulge the hope of it, or until it ſhould pleaſe the people to declare, that they would no longer hope, or counterfeit hope, but would diſmiſs thoſe ſuperanuated authorities from their ſervice,——this meaſure, too, I ſaw rejected, by the expreſs diſapprobation of ſome leading individuals, by the obvious diſinclination of the Committee as a body, and by their adoption of reſolutions differing much in ſpirit and complexion.——I ſaw that, in the ſame breath with which we were to call on the Volunteers again to array themſelves, "and to encreaſe their numbers, and improve their diſcipline," we

were to declare our disapprobation of any addition to the forces of the kingdom,—regular,* I think, as well as in form of a militia,—and this at a time when we were engaged, (no matter how or wherefore) in an uncommon and perhaps dangerous war.——I saw that, while it was thus, in a manner, declared to be our object to make the people (in other words, *the warm and active part of them)* as strong as possible, and to keep the government of the country, as much as possible in a state of weakness; and while, on the one hand, we declined any declaration of attachment to our friends, or "confederated brethren," in England, and were, on the other, to declare our disapprobation of a war *already commenced, and now* (by any efforts of our's, at least) *inevitable*, against those, whom not a few of us had been in the habit of considering as our brethren of France, as fighting the battles of *man* against *despotism*,—and now therefore, no doubt (did we but confide in them) our ready and trusty *protectors*;—while we were acting *thus*, we were to announce A CONVENTION OF THE PEOPLE, to speak probably the warm and now

* That part against the addition to the standing army, if my recollection do not fail me as to there being any such, was, it seems, given up.

enthuſiaſtic, and, of courſe, unweighed and indigeſted opinions of the people, and to be ſupported by the people's *irreſiſtible army*.—Seeing all theſe meaſures thus in train for execution, and viewing them (ſo far as time and hurry allowed me to view any thing diſtinctly) as likely to appear under the colours and character which I have deſcribed, I truſt it will be granted, by any man of political comprehenſion and political heart,—that it is, at leaſt, *poſſible*, that any little ſpirit of petty authorſhip, any paternal, or maternal tenderneſs for a *period* produced with labour, or for a *ſound*, the laſt child of fancy (which writers, little as well as great, are accuſed of) *might*, in me, a mere ordinary man, without dying-away in ſenſibility, or being yet ripe for "the kiſs of fraternity,"—have been loſt, and ſwallowed up, in an apprehenſive anxiety, if not ſorrow, for *the probable degradation of the* POPULAR CHARACTER, *and the poſſible deſtruction of* POPULAR HAPPINESS.

This anxiety I did feel, unmixed, if I know myſelf, with a baſer ſentiment; nor was it likely to be removed by the information we received of certain popular arts, practiſed, probably, with the beſt intentions, but not likely to be thence leſs pernicious in their effect. A propoſition,

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of a gentleman ſaid to have, from his character, ſome political lead in the country, declaring that "*God and Nature*, as well as the *Conſtitution*," entitled the people of Ireland to be fully repreſented in Parliament, &c. had been rejected by the Committee, or got rid of as by a previous queſtion. The propoſer, it was ſaid, carried his reſolution immediately into *the market-place*, and ſhewed the Delegates, with much indignation, the (no doubt, undeniable and neceſſary) propoſition "which *their Committee* had rejected!" Whether we thence paſſed with theſe Delegates for perfect *atheiſts*, *monſters* and *traitors*, wantonly inſulting God, Nature, and our Country, I know not; but probably this communication was not loſt upon the hearers and their brethren.—If the rejection of *ſuch* a propoſition was ſpread abroad as a proof of diſaffection in the Committee, what would not have been ſaid of men who declined receiving, from a Belfaſt Delegate, a declaration that "taxation and repreſentation are *inſeparable*, &c.?" To ſeveral it appeared, I believe, at leaſt unneceſſary, and, to me, it ſeemed alſo capable of a falſe and dangerous application; nor did "the opinion of the whole nation of America," much as I reſpect them, and even their reſiſtance to the Britiſh claims, appear to me deciſive as to the conſti-

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tutional truth of the *principle*. The propoſition, however, was withdrawn.

But " the multitudinous tongue" was not, alone, to have the honour of teaching delegates their duty, or of warning the honeſt among them of the deſigns of the diſaffected *. French *Placards*, in good plain Engliſh however, appeared on the ſecond morning, before the meeting of the Convention, conſpicuouſly ſtuck up on the cor-

* I have ſince the meeting, heard of ſome little political anecdotes, equally falſe and improbable, having been circulated of myſelf, among the Delegates, at the very moment that my conduct in the committee was ſtill farther, if poſſible, confuting them, and when I ſhould as ſoon have ſuſpected an accuſation againſt me for coining, or witchcraft. The time, place, and manner of diſtributing theſe calumnies, ſufficiently ſhew their origin and object.—I only allude to them, as ſome evidence of *a certain ſyſtem of government*, which ſome, I believe, would have no objection to eſtabliſh over the minds, meaning no doubt the *underſtandings*, of the people. It would be only a gentle kind of *modeſt direction* of their opinions, prejudices, and paſſions, as to whom they ſhould truſt, and how far, and how they ſhould, on *all neceſſary occaſions*,—for the public good,—ſet him, and his opinions aſide, by ſcouting, blaſting, branding, &c. &c. a kind of *demago-cracy*, which muſt be a great improvement on any of " the *ſimple* forms of government," even on a *repreſentative democracy* itſelf, of which it ſeems to be either the *acmè* or *euthanaſia*.

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ners of ſtreets, &c. " DELEGATES!!! (ſaid " they) BEWARE EQUALLY of the arts of THE " ARISTOCRACY, and the ſilky ſoothing mea- " ſures of YOUR COMMITTEE!"—How far *the committee* deſerved the *hard* epithets given to their labours (ſufficiently unintelligible, no doubt, to mechanical as well as political Delegates) the labours of the committee themſelves, adopted with ſo few changes by the Convention, will beſt prove. But this ſuſpected, and therefore dangerous *Ariſtocracy*, was generally underſtood to deſcribe certain Delegates from the county of Down—the greater or moſt leading part of whom, at leaſt, were members of the Northern Whig Club, were, as ſuch, declared friends of reform, and had by their uniform conduct, as freeholders and as volunteers, ſhewn themſelves attached, not only to what is popularly conſidered the independence of their own county, but to that of the kingdom at large, I might add, I believe, to the liberty of mankind.—This being, then the general deſcription of our *Down Dungannon Ariſtocracy* (and gentlemen are at liberty to add as many others as they can find, from other counties, to whom the odious appellation of *ariſtocracy* could be applied) I might leave it with any man of the dulleſt underſtanding to ſay, what is the concluſion naturally to be drawn reſpecting

ſpecting the *political principles* of thoſe dealers in placards and iſſuers of proclamations—*de par le peuple*; and reſpecting *their opinion* of the property, the rank, the political erudition and tenets, the penetration and good ſenſe, of the *majority* of their own aſſembly;—when, in order to carry *their* meaſures, theſe gentlemen, anonymouſly, and by a ſpecies of publication to which the occaſion permitted no anſwer, either on the one hand, defamed a ſet of gentlemen, whom they knew not, or knowing, ought to have truſted, or, on the other, declared it a *general diſqualification* for an honeſt reformer, and a *lawful ſignal* for popular ſuſpicion and diſtruſt, that a Delegate of the People ſhould be—*a gentleman*, or ſhould poſſeſs that *rank* and *property*, which give him a great and permanent intereſt in his country.

From the public political diſtruſt of gentlemen, and of men of property,—as ſuch,—to the deſtruction of *all ranks* and *all property*, and, with them, *all liberty and ſecurity*, the progreſs, in a revolution, is as neceſſary as the accelerated motion of a falling body; and the *reform* that ſhould *begin* on ſuch principles, muſt *end*, not merely in a revolution, but in anarchy. The humble, perhaps innocent *Eſſays* at Dungannon, would, in the hands of ſome of our faithful co-

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pyiſts and enterpriſing imitators of unhappy France, as ſurely "ſerve to the hiſtory" of *a French Revolution in Ireland*, as the impriſonment of the unfortunate Lewis muſt appear now, to all of us, to have led to his murder, or the government of the mob of Paris—to the tyranny of plunderers and aſſaſſins.

LETTER III.

THE more I thought of the measures to be proposed to the Convention, the less I liked them. An appeal from the Committee to the Convention itself might not be, exactly, one "*from Philip inflamed to Philip sober*;" but it seemed necessary.——If it should not succeed, it would be a sort of record, that other measures had been, at least, proposed, and it would be an ultimate appeal to the constituent body, or to the people at large. Disagreeable as it must ever be to propose what, almost certainly, will be disapproved,—and doubly disagreeable, as the moving of any thing unpopular must be to one, who, like me, had ever leaned to the democratic side, which was his own,—who had ever, in all companies, at least, that verged to the aristocratic, *confessed* himself *a democrate*, and who sincerely wished that *all popular meetings* should, for the sake of the people itself, be *respectable*,——I thought this service had become a duty.——If it succeeded, it would do good; if it failed, it operated as a protest. I resolved, therefore, to propose

propoſe to the Convention the adoption of ſuch *leading propoſitions* of mine as marked out *a different ſyſtem of popular opinions and conduct* from that preferred by the Committee; and was, of courſe, to move;—that they ſhould add, by way of amendment, to their firſt reſolution, the *reaſons* for preferring the Britiſh Conſtitution, contained in my firſt propoſition; and alſo, that they ſhould adopt my ninth propoſition, on the peaceable means of a redreſs of grievances, and the following one, on a petition to Parliament.

In this determination I was only the more confirmed, by the accounts which, early in the ſecond morning, we received of the patriotic *manœuvres* and *manifeſtoes* mentioned in my laſt letter; ſome of which might equally affect the paſſions of the Delegates who were to *exhibit*, if I may ſay ſo, and of their audience in the galleries, who had ſhewn, by a little applauſe once, conferred on ſome warm or bold expreſſions, that they were not *moſt* delighted with ariſtocratic lullabies. The ſpirit which I ſaw, inſtead of exciting, repreſſed my own. If this prove me a political coward, I cannot help it. I began now to doubt, whether a declaration in my ninth propoſition, which, in writing (and part of it I had written juſt before the meeting of the Committee on buſineſs) had appeared perfectly innocent, might not, in its conſequences,

be inflammatory; that, I mean, which ſuppoſes, *in ſome ſort*, the poſſibility of "a war of the miniſter, or of a cabal, againſt the people," &c. and, in terms perhaps too ſtrong or highflown, gives an opinion on the certain failure of ſuch a war, if ſuch a war were poſſible.

Doubting *now*, and merely doubting, the tendency of this part of the propoſition; and thinking this poſſible tendency to inflame, not neceſſary;—and conceiving the declaration itſelf as a part of the whole propoſition, not eſſential;—I reſolved to omit it in my propoſed motion.

Here again muſt I confeſs a political ſin. I left the Committee, for a time, to purſue their labours, and paid my addreſſes to the ariſtocracy. —I explained to my Brother-Delegates of the county of Down, my opinions, and the reaſons on which they were founded, and read them the amendment and propoſitions which I intended, with their approbation, to move. I told them at the ſame time, that I ſhould probably be obliged, in giving reaſons for theſe propoſitions, to bear a little hard on the conduct of ſome public bodies, particularly of the late Belfaſt town meeting; and perhaps, of conſequence (I added, laughingly) to take ſome *liberties* with an acquaintance of mine

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then preſent, the chairman of that meeting.——I had every reaſon, unleſs the politeneſs of theſe gentlemen deceived me, to think that their opinions and mine were literally the ſame. They ſaid they would ſupport what I propoſed—ſome, that they would proteſt, though ſingle, if violent meaſures were adopted; a reſolution which I alſo declared. I told them that *their* ſtake in the country was much greater than mine; but I had ſome ſtake in it, which I did not wiſh to riſk, and that, at all events, I thought this conduct my duty. I would not, however, preſs them to reſolve on any thing haſtily.—I left the propoſitions, I think, for them to conſider and conſult on. They would tell me the reſult.—This reſult was, that, after ſome time, one of theſe gentlemen informed me, that, on ſecond thoughts, they did not wiſh to make this *attack* on the town of Belfaſt, and that they, therefore, wiſhed to give up the idea of moving the propoſitions, though their opinion on them was the ſame as before,—and though they wiſhed them, if it were poſſible, adopted.—I could not ſay I diſapproved of the delicacy of theſe gentlemen towards their neighbours of Belfaſt.——To preſs the matter, might, in me, have ſeemed to proceed from ſome reſentment at my own propoſitions being overlooked, ſome vanity in appearing as a ſort of leader,

leader, or in *exhibiting* as any thing like an orator ;—while, in reſpect to the latter ſort of exhibition, I have, from feelings partly inſtinctive and almoſt boyiſh, not overcome by perſonal habits, and rather increaſed by the ridiculous diſplays I have been witneſs to, conceived a diſlike bordering on contempt and diſguſt.—I could, to ſay the truth, have the leſs ſtomach for any ſuch attempt, as I knew my talents, ſuch as they are, to be not of the popular kind, and believed my opinions, on this occaſion, ſo little likely to pleaſe the million, that the ſervice ſeemed to be a forlorn hope and a fruitleſs martyrdom. I eaſily yielded to the determination of my Brother Delegates, thinking it natural, if not praiſe-worthy in *them*, though I was myſelf by no means convinced of its intrinſic propriety. I reſolved to leave the oratorial field in the Convention to perſons more inclined, and better qualified, to beat it, and to appear no farther in that of politics, than abſolute neceſſity might ſeem to require.—The defects of the propoſitions, if they were defects, ſeeming ſyſtematic and incurable, all oppoſition to them muſt have been fruitleſs ;—and that ſuch oppoſition was not more likely to ſucceed by coming *from me*, I had afterwards, I thought, a remarkable inſtance in the *difficulty* which one of the ſecretaries, and ſeveral others, ſeemed

ſeemed to find in conceiving the meaning, or propriety, of a very ſimple amendment which I moved, to a clauſe in the ſeventh reſolution, by inſerting the word *equal* before the words " *extenſion* of elective franchiſe to perſons of every religious perſuaſion;"—for theſe were the words adopted by the Convention.—This has ſince been called " a *verbal* amendment," in a Derry publication, mentioning it as *mine*, but not ſaying *what* the amendment was, nor, it is evident, intending to inſinuate any thing in my favour.—How ſuch an amendment could be, for a moment, miſunderſtood, ſeems inconceivable; and no perſon could object to the *principle* of it, who agreed to the reſolution for " the immediate and entire emancipation" of the Catholics. I mention this circumſtance, as indicating *a certain kind of ſpirit* in ſome individuals; not from any wiſh to flatter the Catholics, *in their hour of ſucceſs*; —a conduct of which ſome of their leading men here know me, I believe, to be incapable.

When the reſolution as to a *Militia* was read, I was ſo ſtruck with the wording of it, that I believe it muſt have paſſed in the committee while I happened to be abſent.—As propoſed, it expreſſed " *concern* and *aſtoniſhment*" at the intention of embodying a militia being entertained.—I did not till

till after the meeting, recollect that the county from part of which I was a Delegate, had publicly disapproved of this measure ;—and, if I had, it is probable I should, *for myself*, have expressed the same sentiments I did.—I declared I was " not at all astonished" at the idea ;—that it seemed *not unnatural* that government should think of adding to the military force of the kingdom when we were actually engaged in a dangerous and extraordinary kind of war, one in which our enemies professed, indeed, not to wage *war* but to *bring liberty* ;—that, if any such addition to our forces were necessary, a militia was certainly the safest and most constitutional ; that *I was not prepared to say* that *the Volunteers* were, under these circumstances, a *sufficient defence* to the country ; or that the measure " could *only* have *ministerial patro-* " *nage*" for its object ;—that I could conceive it to have *other*, and very proper, and perhaps necessary objects, besidespatronage ;—that I therefore begged I might not be held *concluded* by the propofition, as it stood. I was instantly taken up by a Delegate from Derry, as having insinuated something against the volunteers.—I simply *denied the charge* ; and the gentleman was happy I had *explained*, when he should rather have been happy to find he *misunderstood* me. Upon this, however, we had some handsome eulogiums pronounced on the

the volunteers; of whom a Belfaſt paper, very handſomely, tho' I believe not truly, ſays I ſpoke "with reſpect." I ſpoke *with reſpect* of *the volunteers!*—juſt as much, I believe, as I did of Tippoo Saib. I no more dreamt, I think, of doing ſo, (tho' not quite for the ſame reaſon) than I ſuppoſe a good cordial lover would of entertaining his miſtreſs with his *profound reſpect* for her, in a *tête-a-tête*. The gentlemen do me quite too much honour. Yet, after all I heard in praiſe of my old friends the volunteers, and after all the weighty reaſons that were given to prove that this country is now *better ſecured* or *defended*, by them, than in Eighty two, when they were much more numerous, beyond compariſon better diſciplined, and extended univerſally over the kingdom, (ſuppoſing the queſtion reſted ſingly on this ground) after all theſe arguments, did I remain an obſtinate ſceptic, and a non-juring patriot. The preſent war appeared to me unlike every other, and the proviſions for it ſhould be as different. Dumourier might offer us his *protection*, as he had done to *Belgium*, and land with *the tree of liberty*. He was the more likely to do ſo, as we profeſſed ourſelves conſiderably diſcontented. The force ready to oppoſe ſuch protection, if offered, and if the war continued, it was not improbable it would be offered, ſhould be not a ſmall

one.—All theſe ſentiments ſeem to me perfectly conſiſtent with my real good opinion of even the *preſent* volunteers *as a body*, and with warm recollection of the truly conſtitutional enthuſiaſm which glowed in our volunteers of *Eighty-two*. I was not called on, nor did I think it neceſſary, to expreſs any opinion, or any doubts I might have entertained of *ſome particular corps*, or of ſome *individuals* at leaſt, of the preſent body:—I hope it is not *Leze-nation* to have ſome ſuch doubts, for if it be, I freely ſay, that I am *now* a confirmed traitor—and yet all that I ſaid at Dungannon was guiltleſs of an intended inſinuation of this kind; and I had then leſs of the guilt of *thinking* ſo than, from ſubſequent reflection, I have at this day.

The militia-reſolution expreſſed at firſt but "concern and aſtoniſhment" at the intention of embodying them. To get rid of the ſurpriſing word *aſtoniſhment*, it was moved that *indignation* ſhould be ſubſtituted, which, without being ſo intended, I believe, made the denunciation more deadly. But a Delegate, whom I had expected to be among the moderate men, moved for expunging *our concern* at the project of government; —"he felt *no concern* upon the occaſion," he ſaid; the meaning of which words I find myſelf even

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now at a loſs to underſtand; unleſs it was the unſeemly and almoſt inconceivable one that ſtruck me at the firſt hearing,—that *the more abſurdly* Government and Parliament acted, it was ſo much the better;—the ſooner would *their* Iron deſpotiſm end, and the ſooner would the Saturnian reign of *the people* commence.—What elſe could be the principle of *unconcern* at fooliſh meaſures of a Parliament, then in the very act of conceſſion to the people, and which, according to our own declaration, had "*pledged itſelf*" to farther conceſſion? Yet this was the language of coolneſs itſelf; and is only to be taken as an inſtance of that popular, but ſometimes dangerous temptation, *bravade!*

One word more as to the Volunteers. I went to Dungannon determined not to *propoſe* the meaſure of calling on them to array,—which, after what had paſſed and been publiſhed on the ſubject, might be conſidered as a ſummons to them to aſſiſt us in reforming our Legiſlature;—and I was equally determined *not to oppoſe* the motion, if made by another; for, whatever might be the *real impolicy* of this propoſal, as tending to create ſuſpicion, or ſpread alarm, on the popular *motives* and *intended means* of reform, the people would be apt to conſider any man as an enemy to re-

form, who ſhould oppoſe even a *declaration that they ſhould arm;* a thing widely different from their *being* armed, and ſtill more different from any attempt to *diſarm Government.*

How little reaſon there was to fear that the Volunteers would be overlooked, by the *bolder* reformers, appeared evident, not only from our reſolutions thus ſummoning them and denouncing a Militia, but from an amendment actually moved to the reſolution of thanks to the Volunteers, the *purport* of which was, not that ordinary and "milky" one mentioned in the News-letter of our Delegate and Hiſtoriographer Mr. Joy,—"reſpecting the betraying of truſt, the abuſe of delegated authority, and bartering the privileges of conſtituents for diſgraceful rewards;"—but a good round and plump declaration of our expectation or hopes, that, if *Parliament* did not *itſelf reform itſelf* (and, I ſuppoſe, by a ſhort day) "the *irreſiſtible force* of the *conſtituent body*" would make its appearance *in propria perſona*,—take the buſineſs into its own hands, and ſettle it, no doubt, in its own manner. The private integrity of the Gentleman who moved this amendment is, I believe, as unqueſtioned as are, I underſtand, his ſkill in his own profeſſion, and his zeal in going through with whatever he cordially undertakes. It is not to be ſuppoſed, however, that he could, *in reality*,

have been more *ſerious* in the intention which appeared on *the face* of this propoſal, than ſome of us thought it neceſſary to be in the manner of receiving it. He could only have wiſhed, as we all do, that Government ſhould perceive, there was *a ſpirit* in the people, which it would be more prudent and proper to concede to than to trifle with. However, as the propoſal was, in its whole extent, *apparently* ſerious, and might by many, not of the hearers only, but of thoſe who would circulate the buſineſs, be conſidered as really ſuch; and as the perſonal character of the mover might have too much political weight with the people in his own neighbourhood, it ſeems neceſſary to remark; that it is this very language and mode of proceeding, in ſome friends of the people, and in ſome perhaps who are incapable of being friends to any but themſelves, which has gone a great way to *ruin* the popular cauſe,—to alienate or alarm real and warm friends of reform, and to furniſh Government with not an excuſe merely, but (I will ſay it) a juſtification for meaſures of ſtrength, offenſive as well as defenſive.—I remark on this mode of proceeding the more freely, and from greater conviction of the neceſſity, as the praiſes given in the principal papers of the province, to the ardency of this Gentleman's zeal, to his candour, and his underſtanding

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(meaning, I ſuppoſe, his *political* underſtanding) ſhewn in parts of the debate, might tend to propagate, and give force to certain opinions and maxims, which a very popular Delegate choſe to applaud ſo highly as to ſay,—" he approved of *every thing* that Gentleman had ſaid that day, (or at that meeting)—*only* he did not, perhaps, think it proper to uſe *ſuch ſtrong expreſſions*." If the ſpirit of the propoſals made that day by the Gentleman thus publickly applauded, by Delegates who ought not, even in appearance, to miſlead the people, were *followed up*,—the *effect* (I am far from ſaying, the *intended* effect) would be, a civil war in the country, before many months. The queſtion would then no longer be,—reform, but political ſalvation; no longer, perhaps, civil or political liberty, but perſonal exiſtence, and that of property, reputation, honour, and the *power* of acting according to a man's conſcience, when all that he held dear, all that bound him to earth or to mankind, depended on the paſſions of mobs, or the principles of demagogues.

When we had drawn out our Volunteers, and diſpatched the Militia, we came, not indeed to put an *end* to the French war, but to reſolve that *we wiſhed* it had never begun. How this meaſure paſſed in the Committee, I have not the leaſt recollection,

collection, and therefore conclude I muſt, at the moment, have been abſent. By ſeveral of us, it was objected to, as not connected with reform, nor, of courſe, within our commiſſion, or the objects of the meeting; by others, and particularly by me, on this ground alſo, that, beſides going out of our way without doing good, either to France or ourſelves, (for now, we could not prevent the war, whichwas commenced, and which *England* would ſupport) we might, do ſome harm, by giving occaſion for the ſuſpicions ſo often mentioned, that our principles and inclinations were French, and that we ſhould have little objection to their aſſiſtance in our projected reform. There ſeemed the more reaſon to think this ſuſpicion poſſible, as we ſhewed, by our declaration againſt a Militia, that we wiſhed Government not to be much *in force*, even of the conſtitutional kind. Our meaſures ſingly, might be innocent; taken together, they might appear otherwiſe. If to ſay *any thing* on the ſubject were neceſſary, we muſt do the beſt we could, and at all hazards. Here we volunteered for difficulties.

Moſt, if not all who ſpoke, expreſſed their ſtrong diſlike of the war itſelf. I did ſo too, in expreſſions of which I now am literally aſhamed. For, though I deteſted from my ſoul, when it was firſt formed, the combination of Deſpots (I called them)

them) againſt France;—conſidering it as a conſpiracy againſt liberty itſelf, in one againſt the *real* and *free* will of a generous and high-ſpirited people, who had choſen their Government, and would keep to it, and exerciſe it in juſtice, mildneſs, mercy, and gratitude to their benefactors, —among the firſt of whom was their King;—though I had been one of thoſe who rejoiced in the Auſtrian and Pruſſian diſcomfiture;—though I had *ſuppoſed* the unhappy Lewis but too juſtly *dethroned*, and that he muſt have been ſomewhat more than man, if he had not *wiſhed* the conſtitution deſtroyed, and if, ſo wiſhing, he had, by neither act nor omiſſion, from neither inclination nor weakneſs, betrayed it;—yet having ſeen a *mock-trial* prove the impoſſibility of a *fair conviction;* having had but one opinion, and having yielded, I thank my God, to but one feeling, as to the laſt *nameleſs* outrage, not merely on a fallen King, but on every thing that intereſts us in juſtice, honour, and humanity;—having opened my eyes, at length, to ſomething more than a ſuſpicion, that, where ſuch foul acts, or even an acquieſcence in them, are the only means to gain, or to preſerve power, or are the neceſſary conditions of tenure on which property and life itſelf are held; —I am *compelled* to own, that there muſt be, in the very principles of the ſtate, if not wide and

deep

deep over the nation itſelf, *ſomething* ſo deſperately *rotten*, that the means of cure may not be within the immediate comprehenſion of every little reaſoner and little wit among us; that the lover of liberty *may* be obliged, for a while, to bid his ſoul ſuſpend her functions, or to mark only the unfolding of things, and in the mean time, to believe it *poſſible*, that if Kings and Miniſters, it muſt be granted, act only from the motives of *men*, —yet, on this occaſion, they *may* be men, or may have the merit at leaſt, of "plagues or earthquakes," in ſweeping away the ſtench of carnage and putridity, and rendering the earth a habitation fit for man.

In the progreſs of the human mind, there are *truths*, clear perhaps, when once admitted, and but the natural or neceſſary conſequences of other truths already admitted, which yet the heart of man muſt be allowed to receive with heſitation and diſtruſt. That a war of kings and nobles, to deſtroy a popular government, no matter of what kind, or how it may have conducted itſelf, how it may have tyranniſed over its enemies, or gaſconaded and threatened, in reſpect to thoſe who could not be its friends,—that ſuch a war *can* be one not to be execrated in every ſtage and circumſtance;—or that the *motives* of our miniſter

in joining such a confederacy, and declining negotiation, *could* deserve even a suspended reprobation, is perhaps one among the truths I have mentioned. At Dungannon, certainly, I forgot the commenced train of my own reasonings, and went, vulgarly perhaps, with the popular torrent of indiscriminate censure of the war, tho' I thought it my duty not to give the opinion as a Delegate. The manœuvre of reserving the question on the French war till the business of the Convention was over, and the chairman had left the chair,—that so we,—known to be the same body of men, only under a different name, and with a different chairman, should do that which we doubted the *propriety* of our doing in our own name, and under our own character;—that we should say—"Now, Gentlemen, take notice,—we are "not *Gentlemen* but *Delegates*"—and now, again,—"we are not *Delegates*—we are *only Gentlemen!*"—this dignified *Hocus Pocus* was thought a most happy compromise of opinions, and all that remained to give full effect to the political juggle, was,—that "honourable mention" should *not* be made of it in the proceedings of the day,—that the Delegates should invite *the Galleries and Streets* to the "honours of the sitting,"—and that the Printer should get a sly hint, to put the *advertisement* into a different corner of the paper. To this manœuvre, however,

however, I, for one, did not chuſe to lend myſelf, or " to do *indirectly* what I had declared againſt doing in a direct manner;" and a few of us choſe to retire from the meeting, that it might, ſo far at leaſt, be different a meeting, and that we might play no part in the " Dance *by the characters*,"—or the *After-piece*.

If there are points in which I am not much indebted to the favour of the Committee, there is one, at leaſt, in which I acknowledge myſelf their debtor, and in which the nation too owes them a ſpecies of gratitude. They adopted of two meaſures, the weaker, or the leſs violent. They preferred appointing a Committee to call, if neceſſary, a National Convention, rather than themſelves, hold, as I propoſed,—a ſort of *permanent ſitting*, by adjournment to *a day certain*. We could have done little more if the country were declared " in danger." By this meaſure, the Delegates have ſaved themſelves (and me as one, I thank them) ſome trouble, and the nation, I truſt, will not ſuffer much by the change.

On the propoſal being made for calling ſhortly a *National Convention*, a Delegate from Belfaſt, who has been among the moſt ſtrenuous ſupporters of the warm meaſures of that town, oppoſed the propoſition, and preferred leaving the power with the Committee, giving ſome rea-

ſons for the *preſent delay* of this call, which, I think, ought not to paſs unremarked. They ſeemed to contain more than met the ear, and what did meet the ear was not without ſufficient meaning. After obſerving that he had been inſtructed, and had intended to vote for the call of a National Aſſembly on a fixed day, he mentioned, as I recollect (and I think I cannot forget the purport of what he ſaid, or it's *impreſſion* on me) that, *ſince he had come to the Convention*, he *had received information*, which had changed his opinion. That in the *preſent* ſituation of the Catholics of this kingdom (the bill for their relief then depending, I ſuppoſe he meant) it would be highly imprudent in them to come forward; but that *he had good reaſon to be aſſured*, that, as ſoon as they could with ſafety, they would join the Proteſtants warmly in purſuit of a reform; even though gratified with all they had aſked from Government; "FOR EVEN THEN, *they would only be our* BRO-"THER-SLAVES." It was our part to await *their time*, and, when that laſt meaſure of the people, a National Convention, ſhould be reſorted to, *he would riſk his whole fortune in carrying the will of this Convention into effect.*

Such appeared to be the ſentiments of a Delegate in whom I ſhould wiſh to excuſe much of what might be called exceptionable,

—entertaining

—entertaining for him, as a man and even kinſman, a perſonal regard, and having thought that, in many fundamental points, we coincided in political opinion. But the political popularity of this gentleman in his town and neighbourhood, his known connection with certain warm ſocieties, and with ſome Catholic leaders, during their late revolution, and the confidence which his zeal, and I believe, ſome real good ſervices have inſpired, together with the influence which he may have from ſome conſiderable commercial property, have made me think that *ſuch* ſentiments and hints, delivered by him, on ſuch a public occaſion, are a call on me for ſome critical reproof.

A public declaration, that a man of ſome property and influence would *riſk* his whole fortune, (if he did not ſay his life itſelf) in ſupport of WHATEVER ſhould be determined reſpecting a reform of our Conſtitution, by *a future* popular or National Convention, is, in itſelf, one ſhould think, to all men of common-ſenſe, a ſubject of alarm. The conſequences of ſuch *anticipated pledges* to *uncertain*, *future alterations*, muſt convey to the public a clear opinion,—and ſuch clear opinions have already been given by others, —that *no* alteration of our Conſtitution *can* be for the worſe; or, that no National Convention

" *can*

" *can do wrong*;"—either opinion, no doubt, moſt *conſtitutional*, moſt comfortable, and moſt ſafe!—But, to aſcertain, that one of theſe opinions is actually held, we are ſcarce left to criticiſm or conſtruction.—We are, at this very Convention, and by this very gentleman, informed, in ſo many words, of what *Wiſdom herſelf* had before told us, from the ſtreets of Belfaſt,—when too many *did* liſten to her,—that WE (as a nation, no doubt, and as individuals) are *neither more nor leſs* than SLAVES. If it be ſo—'tis grievous!—pitiful!—and *no alteration*, in truth, *can* be for the worſe; and the *ſooner*, and the *more* we alter, I ſuppoſe it will be the better!—Oh, but—" we muſt wait for the Catholics."—True;—I had forgot the Catholics.—Now, that they are a part of us, we ſhall be forgetting them more and more, poor people, every day!—But if, as I *underſtood* the fact to be, and as thoſe who heard it, muſt I think, have underſtood it, *the Catholics*, or any leading individuals among them, or any ſuppoſed friends of theirs, on their behalf,—*have informed* or *aſſured* this their zealous and known friend and confidant—that *they*, in due ſeaſon, and when ſafely, in reſpect to their bill, they may, would join, in their ſtrongeſt meaſures, *ſuch* reformers,—men who tell them, that they *now*, after all they have got, and that we ourſelves, in all time paſt, have

have been, and now are—*perfect and abſolute ſlaves*, &c. &c.—if this be the fact, (and if not, I truſt it will be contradicted by the parties moſt intereſted)—our reformers and our reform are in a hopeful condition, indeed;—and a bleſſed reform it will be,—when it makes its appearance,—pure and perfect from the hands of our Omnipotence!

When the buſineſs of the Convention was juſt at a cloſe, it occurred to me that there yet remained one feeble attempt to be made, to ſave the character of ſome individuals, if nothing, in that particular, could be done for the Convention itſelf.—I therefore, with permiſſion of thoſe neareſt me of the Delegates of the county of Down, (they all before indeed had approved the principal idea) mentioned to the Chairman; that it had been my wiſh, and that of many gentlemen near me, with whom I had the honour of conſulting, to have propoſed a reſolution for a *petition to Parliament;* but that the lateneſs of the hour, and our having reaſon to think the motion would occaſion a debate, and not meet with general concurrence, prevented my troubling the meeting with it. No notice was taken of the obſervation; nor was any encouragement given me to proceed, nor have our newſpapers of the North

which

which favoured the world with an account of our proceedings, condeſcended to take any notice whatever of the circumſtance. That an individual, no matter who, but ſupported, it was evident, by a reſpectable liſt of gentlemen; expreſſed a wiſh,—could they hope to prevail,—to procure from the meeting a petition to Parliament for a redreſs of the grievances we complained of, and of which legal and peaceable redreſs could only be obtained through Parliament,—*this* was a *fact*, in the hiſtory of *ſuch* a Convention, which one even of ourſelves, our ſecretary and hiſtorian, Mr. Joy, conſidered as either of *too much*, or *too little* importance to give to the public, amidſt the details of our *acta eruditorum*, and the panegyrics of our *Angelic Doctors* and *Illuſtriſſimi*.—It was no part of his own luminous ſyſtem, nor of that of any bright and be-praiſed aſſociate.——It was therefore of no importance to the public.——It could inform them of nothing.——It could ſet them to think upon nothing.——Nor ſhould the fact be allowed to join its aid to my *expreſs diſſent** from the militia

* The diſſent was expreſs, and *repeated*, after hearing the arguments on the other ſide. Its not having been given by a *formal negative* on the *queſtion*, juſtifies *the printer of the*

militia reſolution, in *diſproving* the public aſſertion of our ſecretary and hiſtorian, that "the meeting—on *every queſtion*,—terminated in *perfect unanimity*."

I ſhould degrade myſelf, and feel it impoſſible to apologize to you, gentlemen, or to the public, for even mentioning theſe and many other particulars, which ſeem ſo inſignificant in themſelves, and ſo merely perſonal, did not theſe facts make, in my opinion, ſo many links in a chain of proofs, that the public mind has occaſion to be *on its guard*, and to be *warned*,—that when, in the very commencement of a mere peaceable reform, arts ſuch as I have mentioned will be condeſcended to by *the friends of liberty*, and by men who have *an intereſt in peace*,—when defamatory ſuſpicions will be poſted up and circulated in market-places,—when the private and the public ear will be poiſoned, to ſuit the occa-

the reſolutions, but not the *hiſtorian of the meeting*, in uſing the above-quoted words, in one of his publications. In the reſolution on the militia, I ſee the more general word miniſterial "*influence*," ſubſtituted for "*patronage*." The latter was, I recollect, the word againſt which I contended; and I believe it was the word which paſſed *in the Convention*.

ſion,—when men, bound by every tie of duty and delicacy, will pretend to give *facts* to the public, and give them not perfect, nor in their ſpirit, nor ungarbled, nor doing juſtice to individuals, nor doing juſtice to the public itſelf, nor free from unfair *inſinuation*, where it is not dared to aſſert, or from unfair *ſuppreſſion*, where diſcloſing the whole truth, might amount to a diſcovery or to ſelf-conviction;—if ſuch, I ſay, are the firſt fruits of attempts at a *peaceable reform*, and the firſt acts of ſome of our *moſt virtuous reformers*,—our people ſhould be cautious how they harbour a *thought* of *ſuch* changes, called by whatever name, as muſt be procured by *means* that would put their property, their lives, their honour,—*all*—*all* in the power of ſuch men as may ſtart up in a diſordered ſtate, and, ſeiſing or hiring, and opening and cloſing at pleaſure, the ſources of public information, may thence poiſon and diſtract the public mind, deal out fame or infamy, as intereſt or ambition may require, make every thing a crime which a faction decrees ſuch, nothing law, at length, but rapacity and ruin, and nothing juſtice but the will of aſſaſſins of life or reputation.

LETTER IV.

I HAVE already made ſome apology for eternal egotiſms, for my little tales, and for the too frequent hero of them.——I truſt, gentlemen, you will perceive that *principles* and *perſons*,—*minute circumſtances* and *important concluſions*,—have been ſo neceſſarily interwoven, that I ſhall ſtand abſolved with you, either of trifling detail, or of any inordinate vanity, or of wanton perſonality. Should it be otherwiſe, the cenſure is only *one* of the riſks which I have foreſeen, and thought it my duty to encounter.

I am now to go ſtiligreater, and, it will ſeem, more unpardonable lengths, in perſonal accuſation; lengths which I have, I might ſay induſtriouſly, endeavoured to prevent the neceſſity of, which, even after they became neceſſary, I have wiſhed not to think ſuch, and which now, did it ſeem poſſible, I would avoid,—for the ſake of ſome of the perſons who may appear involved;—for the ſake of myſelf, who may ſuffer by it in the opinion of many;—and for the ſake of the people, who, ſhould I

even be juſtified in the opinion I have formed, *may* ſuffer a *temporary* injury, a temporary depreſſion of a really conſtitutional ſpirit of reform, by the attempt to ſecure to them an apparently leſs immediate, but infinitely more important advantage,—that very Conſtitution, indeed, which they wiſh reformed. I am to prove ſome former aſſertions, not merely by a defence of myſelf, but *by attacking others*.—I am to prove, that if there is not, *in fact*, in many of our reformers a ſtrong and dangerous diſpoſition to republicaniſm, both the enemies and friends of reform have *reaſon to ſuſpect*, or *fear* that there is. The *principle*, therefore, if it exiſts, muſt be met and guarded againſt; or the *ſuſpicion* muſt be done away, by the explanation or correction of former miſtakes.

In attacking others, I may be "cruſhed under foot"—but I ſhall leave it to thoſe others themſelves to determine, from my mode of attack, whether I am one of that deſcription of their calumniators, "born (as they expreſs it) to bite the heel."

In making war on *the United Iriſhmen of Dublin*, I attack a ſociety whoſe firſt eſtabliſhment and

and principles, in their ſpirit and general tendency, I approved; of whom, but for ſome trifling accidents, ſome lucky or unlucky circumſtances in their formation, I ſhould myſelf have been a member, or propoſed as ſuch.——I take liberties with a body of men, for ſome few individuals of whom, that I have lived in a degree of intimacy with, men of conſiderable talents, and I believe much private worth, I feel a perſonal, and even affectionate regard;—a body, to the great majority of whom, as individuals, I attribute perfectly good *intentions*, towards their country, and even its Conſtitution, ſo far as the majority have taken the trouble, or uſed the means, to underſtand it; —and to whom, as a ſociety, I bear this teſtimony of my private opinion,—that they have contributed to raiſe, aſſimilate, and warm into new life and energy, the divided, and thereby depreſſed ſpirit of their countrymen. Happy, had they but known *where to ſtop*;—had they but recollected the difference immenſe, between ſeeing before one's eyes, a ſimple grievance (the *matter of fact* of Catholic depreſſion) and the equally ſimple and only poſſible remedy (the *removal* of penalties and reſtrictions) and the developement of the thouſand *complicated principles, and relations of moral and political ſcience*, on the correſpondence

correſpondence and co-operation of which, the perfection, nay, probably, the very exiſtence of our noble machine of Government (for noble, with all its faults, I will call it) muſt depend.—Happy, had they more juſtly appreciated their own capacity, and political rank, and power, and been content, rationally and ſubſtantially, to ſerve their country, leſs meretriciouſly ambitious to ſhine.

But why do I ſpeak of appreciating their own capacity, rank and power?—This requires much capacity. Why ſpeak of their rationally and ſubſtantially ſerving their country? This requires a cultivated underſtanding, and an enlarged political mind. Or, why ſpeak of being free from all meretricious ambition of ſhining? How much political virtue does this require;—how pure, how ſevere a ſelf-denial;—and how much ſuperiority to the ſeductions, and infectious vanities, of leaders.

The *ſo very popular baſe* on which this ſociety was formed, which might have been partly neceſſary at firſt, to extend, *in this city*, the principles of political union and mutual toleration, has made the ſociety, *for any purpoſe of deep and complicated*

complicated diſquiſition, a popular herd,—a multitudinous monſter,—incapable of leading, yet ſimple enough to think it does lead;—while it is hood-winked, and haltered, and paraded about the lanes and alleys by its keepers; then led home to its *menagerie*, and, getting a little more light fodder, wonderous in flavour, and admirable in ſtrength and digeſtion, from the diſtrict of *Mont Blanc*, lays it down in moſt contented unhappineſs, and dreams of its victories throughout all Europe, and of univerſal liberty and illumination ——like its own.

I do not ſay that the principles of the Conſtitution are a perfect *myſtery*, or that any particular body, or caſt of men, are, either by inheritance or election, its only repoſitories, or the only prieſts who can initiate, or can explain it. But this I may ſay,—and ſurely all our republicans will, at leaſt ſo far, agree with me;—that theſe principles do not come down "*from Heaven*," nor lie on the ſurface of the earth;—they are not had by inſpiration, or taken in by the ſenſes;—they are not objects of intuition; and it is very well, they will tell us, if they are not *contrary* to *common ſenſe*.

What

What then,—arguing *a priori*, or in the abſtract, —what can be expected from a body of men, conſiſting of ſome two or three phyſicians, I believe, ſoaring, no doubt, (ſome of them) beyond ordinary deſcription;—a very few lawyers, the majority, probably, not noticed according to their deſerts, and ſome, belike, not averſe to riſing to fees or fame, from popularity;—ſome half dozen of attornies of much zeal, no doubt, and having beſides, we may ſuppoſe, no violent objection to a *modicum* of certain city buſineſs;—ſome non-attending country gentlemen, who ſubſcribed their characters to the cauſe, or to ſerve themſelves in their counties;—ſome good ſubſtantial merchants, of whom a few have lent only their name to the ſociety;—and a multitude of dealers, chapmen, and tradeſmen, not one in fifty of whom can have thought much more of *the Conſtitution*, than is to be learned from a news-paper or a pamphlet, in coffee or in porter-houſe, in a debating ſociety, or from a club in any of our alleys. Can it be thought that *all* or the *majority*, of theſe gentlemen, think for themſelves on the deep points of Conſtitution, Law and Policy, lately and now before them?—If they do not, very few leaders, nay often a ſingle leader, muſt ſave them and the nation the trouble of thinking. If they do think, or do their beſt at the buſineſs,—I fear they and

the

the nation may only gain by it more trouble ſome other way. For how, on ſuch ſubjects, will they think?—Profoundly, no doubt!

He muſt be a deſperate *ariſtocrate* who will deny, that coal factors and tallow-chandlers are moſt worthy and uſeful citizens, in their calling; —and that they can do much to warm and illuminate our *houſes*. But he muſt be an equally deſperate *democrate*, who will contend that theſe honeſt gentlemen are, in the general, the beſt retailers of illumination for the *head*.—We may be plucked, and not taken-in, by a poplin-man in Francis-ſtreet; and New-row or Cut-purſe-row may produce us good leather or good laces; —Bride's-alley furniture may be no way infeſted with *Engliſh-born* vermin; and Plunket-ſtreet may have moſt excellent caſt frippery to diſpoſe of:— yet it does not abſolutely follow, that we muſt travel (as ancient ſages did) into *ſuch* bright regions, as the ſources of ſcience, and nurſeries of legiſlators;—or that we ſhould chuſe to employ any of theſe gentlemen, as wholeſale contractors, in *politically* furniſhing, dreſſing, and trimming our Houſes of Parliament. *Political and legiſlative wiſdom*, we grant, with Paine, is not *hereditary*. We add to this *uſeful* and *applicable*

maxim, another ;—that—*a fortiori*,—it is not *heaven born and univerſal*.

But, as we are not all metaphyſicians, more than all politicians, let us leave the argument, *a priori*, and judge of theſe Conſtitution-makers or menders—" *by their works*." Here one might think, without a breach of charity (unleſs in reſpect to the great body of the ſociety, and many honeſt members; who, I am confident, are guiltleſs of any bad intention, nay guiltleſs often, as ſome of their leaders themſelves may have been at times, of underſtanding the full, or at leaſt apparent, meaning of the productions they gave their ſanction to)—here, I ſay, one might think they *wiſhed* to be " but dimly ſeen," and to reſerve the purer diſpenſation, and laſt and expreſs revelation, till the fullneſs of time;—till our unſealed eyes are enabled, by cuſtom, to bear the light,—and till our regenerated hearts are become enlarged enough to receive ſuch an influx of celeſtial wiſdom.

In this alſo,—as in the more obſolete revelation, we are to receive the glad tidings from babes and ſucklings, from the ſimple—in *earthly* wiſdom; and the divine truths are to be, to thoſe who have

have any regard for the *preſent* * world or generation—a ſtumbling-block; and, to all our vain philoſophers—perfect fooliſhneſs.—" If," ſays *the book*, " our Conſtitution be *imperfect*—nothing " but a reform in repreſentation will rectify its " abuſes;—if *perfect*,—nothing but *the ſame re-* " *form* will perpetuate its bleſſings †.

" Viſions of *Nonſenſe*,—ſpare our aching ſight!"

There is no mortal eye can bear their glory! —If the Conſtitution be imperfect—make it per-

* " In thus aſſociating, we have thought little about *our anceſtors*,—much of *our poſterity*." (Addreſs of the Society, December 30, 1791).—Theſe good gentlemen are very amiable in thinking ſo much about their poſterity, and very pious and philoſophic in thinking ſo little about their anceſtors: And many of us will join them, with all our hearts, in thinking nothing at all, if they pleaſe, of *themſelves*. But why dont they think a little of *other people?*—thoſe of the *preſent day*,—thoſe to whom, with their fine feelings, they muſt be ſo *attached*, their fathers, mothers, wives, miſtreſſes, children, friends, &c.?

" Perhaps you were right to *diſſemble your love*;
" But—why did you kick me down ſtairs?"

† Addreſs to the Volunteers, or *Citizen Soldiers*, of Ireland, December, 1792.

fect ;—if perfect already,—make it *more* than perfect,—in other words, *less* than perfect :—make, or mend, or alter it *someway* ;—no matter whether it *requires* it or not ;—make, mend, and alter !—no matter whether, by *altering*, you *mend* ; —*ſtill alter !*—alter, I ſay !—alter !—alter !—Nothing can be worſe than it is at preſent ;—alter ! —Every thing muſt be better than it is at preſent ;—alter !—" Viſions of glory,—ſpare our aching ſight !"—Deſcend not upon us !—We are, indeed, but mortals !

Our Conſtitution being thus certainly to undergo a courſe of alteratives ; and " the *ſame* reform" being the ſpecific, with which our Doctors are to cure, *either* of its great diſorders,—perfection or imperfection,—we are to enquire how far theſe gentlemen appear, *from their declarations*, attached to the patient ; or whether, as it ſeems pretty plainly they work on the terms of " no cure no pay," they may not be willing enough to try a few of thoſe *deſperate remedies*, which ſometimes cure, they tell us,—but ſometimes kill. But to be ſomewhat more ſerious :—That the attachment of our United Iriſhmen to the Conſtitution is not, without ſome

ſhadw

ſhadow of reaſon, *ſuſpected* by a great number of their countrymen, will appear, I think, from many circumſtances; and, among the reſt, from their eternally vilifying deſcriptions of our preſent Conſtitution;—from the ſpirit of republicaniſm ingeniouſly and painfully, it ſhould ſeem, repreſſed in their publications; but which "from very affection," and poſſibly from the natural incontinence of genius, appears burſting continually from its prudential incloſures;—from the ſcattered ideas they have already thrown out on what they would be pleaſed to call a reform; from the means of procuring a reform which they have inſiſted on; and from the language in which alone, almoſt, they will condeſcend to ſpeak,—a uniform and ſerious affectation of the wretched watch-words and *mountebankries* of France. From all theſe, and many more ſuch circumſtances, does this *attachment* of their's appear; and, in fact, all theſe circumſtances ſeem ſo happily and whimſically jumbled in almoſt every production, and ſentence; that it would puzzle a ſchool-man to ſeparate them into heads—or ſay which proves this thing, which that. Every thing proves the whole; and from *Alpha* to *Omega*, from their linſey-wolſey preamble, to their delicate oath in muſic and metaphor, the magnanimous

magnanimous ſoul of the ſociety ſeems to perch and dance upon every point of a letter.*

But let us try to ſeparate them if we can.—" Without an *impartial* and *adequate* repreſenta-" tion of the community (which certainly we *have not*, and, in their ſenſe, never may have) " WE AGREE *in* DECLARING,—We can have *no* " Conſtitution—no Country—no Ireland. (Alas, poor Country,—poor Ireland!—*Who has them then?*—we ſhall hear. They are *in nubibus*,—and alſo in a *band-box.*) " Without this,—our " late revolution WE DECLARE to be *fallacious* " and *ideal*;—(what—a *mere idea!*)—A thing " much talked of—but neither felt nor ſeen." (Why did not the gentlemen add—*nor underſtood?* it is a neceſſary part of the definition, and is, at leaſt, equally true, it ſeems.) " The act of " Iriſh Sovereignty has been *merely toſſed* out of " the Engliſh Houſes into *the cabinet of the miniſ-* " *ter*,—(Oh,—this means that the Engliſh miniſ-

* I mean to except their *declaration*, adopted from the original Society of Belfaſt, which itſelf is to be read with ſome grains of allowance. Every thing good, it ſhould ſeem, is another's, and every thing bad their own.—" Such is the power of mighty *mind!*"

" ter

ter *makes our laws for us!* That he has our Lords and Commons in his *red* or *green box!)* " and NOTHING remains to *the people*,—who, of " right, are every thing,—but a *ſervile majeſ-* " *ty*, and a *ragged independence*."*

This I am really very ſorry to hear;—that the Engliſh miniſter makes *all* our laws;—and that our Lords and Commons allow themſelves to be put into the *ſtrait-waiſtcoat;*—this is bad;—and that the people have *nothing* but *the majeſty of being ſlaves*, and are little better, all the while, than ſo many *free and ragged ſans-culottes;*—worſe and worſe!—Where will all this end?—Why, it muſt end, as they have told us it has already done in Scotland, which is abſolutely *unpeopled* of late. There is not a living ſoul of them remaining. Their " internal government" was a perfect " *chaos*," for want of what they certainly wanted,—a reform;—and, as is natural in all your *chaoſes* (where *wet and dry* contending, as Ovid tells us, neither can ever get the better) the whole people were metamorphoſed immediately into *duſt*,—mere " duſt in the balance;"—and when this was done, nothing was ſo natural as that this

* Circular Letter of the 30th of December, 1791.

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ſame duſt, (the people) ſhould " be *blown abroad* " by the leaſt impulſe, and ſcattered through all " other countries,—*merely* becauſe they *hang* ſo " looſely to their own." Heaven preſerve us!—where will *our light nation* be blown to? I hope not quite ſo far as to Botany Bay.

" We addreſs your *underſtanding*,—the *common* " *ſenſe* of the *common-weal*—(The ſenſe of *all* the people, or of thoſe only who have ſenſe and knowledge enough to underſtand the *common-weal?*)—" and we aſk you, is it not a " TRUTH, that where the people do not partici- " pate in the legiſlature by a delegation of repre- " ſentatives, *freely*, *fairly* and *frequently* elected, " there can be NO *public liberty?* Is it not the " FACT (murder will out) that, *in this country*, " there is NO *repreſentative legiſlature*; becauſe " the people *are not repreſented* in the legiſlature, " and have NO *partnerſhip* in the Conſtitu- " tion?"

That this *is* the fact, they, after thus aſking the queſtion, condeſcend to prove. And how? Very ſimply. Becauſe " *every commoner*" has not a vote for his repreſentative—or is not " *actually* repreſented,"—therefore the people (meaning

theſe

Commoners, *many* of whom *are* actually repreſented) have *no* repreſentation;—becauſe we have not "an *impartial* and *adequate* repreſentation of *all* the people"—therefore, *none* of the people are repreſented—"the people are not *(at all)* repreſented in the legiſlature."—Becauſe they are not *all* partners in the Conſtitution—they "have *no partnerſhip* in the Conſtitution;"—the people, like thoſe of Scotland, have no *manner*, or *degree* of ſhare in "the national firm," nor of courſe, any ſhare in the *national ſtock*,—which nevertheleſs they, very unconſcionably, *live* upon. Becauſe we have not the *very beſt* Conſtitution (and how *could* we have it, till theſe gentlemen *deſcended* upon earth,—for, ſurely, they were not *born*——to enlighten it)—we have "*no* Conſtitution;" becauſe we have not *perfect* public liberty, we have "*no* public liberty;"—and becauſe the people, "who, *of right*, are *every thing*"—are *not* every thing,—therefore they are *nothing* in the Conſtitution. The people, then, being certainly not "made for the Conſtitution,"—and being thus clearly,——nothing,—or "*as* nothing, *to the Conſtitution*,"—it follows, as clearly as that poor Hecuba barked and bit at the ſtones,—but, alas, without hurting the ſtones,—that the Conſtitution is *nothing to us—the people:*—

" *What* is the Conſtitution to *us*, if we are as nothing to the Conſtitution?"—And " if the people do not conſtitute *a part* of it—(as they muſt, by this time, know from theſe gentlemen, they do not,—or they are dull indeed)—" *What* is the Conſtitution to them *more than the ghoſt of Alfred*; and what are *principles without practice*, which they hear and read (there *are* principles, then, in this *No-Conſtitution* of our's—to thoſe *who will hear and read them?* this is ſome comfort:) to *practice without principles*, which the people *ſee and feel?*" —The Conſtitution being thus clearly proved to be *a ghoſt*,—no matter whoſe ghoſt,—what have we, or what *ought* we to ſay to it—but this?—" Unreal mockery,—hence!—Hence,—horrible " ſhadow!—*Take any ſhape but this!*"

That the *adminiſtration* of a government does not neceſſarily depend on its *form and principles*, —that a government can poſſibly be excellent in theory, yet deteſtable in practice,—are opinions which, in this age, would conſign a politician or philoſopher to contempt, and appear unpardonable even in a poet.* When therefore any of the

* " For *forms* of government let *fools* conteſt.
" Whate'er is *beſt adminiſtered* is beſt." POPE.

illuminated

illuminated of the day deſcribe our government as " a *complicated ſyſtem* of *national ſervitude* and " *perſonal oppreſſion*,—of perverted principle and " baſe practice,—a burthen *ſo grievous and inſup-* " *portable*,"—*we may fairly ſay; that they muſt ſhew, *unequivocally*, that they are as truly attached to the Conſtitution itſelf, as they profeſs themſelves to be diſguſted with its abuſes; that if they cannot be blind to its faults, they feel, and are honeſt enough to acknowledge, its perfections,—elſe muſt we entertain ſomething more perhaps than a ſuſpicion,—that the theory and practice, the form and ſubſtance of the Conſtitution, appear to them equally defective, equally deſpicable; and the *whole*, in fine, a uniform and univerſal " maſs of corruption;" incapable, of courſe, of any cure, unleſs *the ſword* would be a cure, or *ſuch* a reform as would only be *a ſlower death*.

Now, ſo far are theſe gentlemen from acknowledging the merit of any part of our exiſting Conſtitution, that the moſt democratic, and the pureſt part (if any part there be which is either pure or democratic) is with them, it ſhould

* Addreſs to the Iriſh Nation, of January the 25th, 1793.

ſeem, but a ſyſtem of downright and abſolute corruption. "Unleſs, ſay they, a reform *immediately* follows Catholic emancipation, the extenſion of the elective franchiſe would *only* add to the maſs of corruption."* This can only be on one of two ſuppoſitions;—that *the added maſs of electors* is, in itſelf, ſo corrupt, that the addition will, on the whole, rather corrupt than purify the Conſtitution, and rather injure than ſerve the people; or, that *the Conſtitution itſelf*, in which this additional maſs of electors is incorporated, is at once ſo corrupt and ſo infectious, that no addition or infuſion can make it better, nor can any thing be added or infuſed, without becoming itſelf worſe, and increaſing inſtead of removing the evil. The firſt ſuppoſition is either an impoſſible one, or cannot be made by theſe gentlemen, or by any friend of Catholic emancipation. It ſeems then that they muſt either adopt the ſecond, or admit that they have ſo indiſcriminately, and, as far as words go, ſo mortally vilified the Conſtitution, that, until they condeſcend to explain themſelves, we may ſay to them, without a violent breach of charity,—We acknowledge, gen-

* Addreſs to the Friends of the People in London, October the 26th, 1792.

tlemen, you would be able pioneers in *a revolution*, but we muſt look a little farther about us, before we take you for our leaders in *a reform*.

But is it only in unqualified reprobation of our own Conſtitution that the principles of theſe gentlemen ſeem to appear? Do they *ſeem* to prefer to it any other form of government?—Do they adopt the principles at preſent moſt dangerous to eſtabliſhed Conſtitutions, thoſe of *republicaniſm*, or do the ideas of reform they have thrown out ſeem to *tend* that way? Both the one and the other, it ſhould ſeem; as far as it can be ſuppoſed, that ſuch principles, *if they entertained them*, could be profeſſed without declared hoſtility againſt the Conſtitution, and without the riſks which muſt attend ſuch a declaration.

" In *four words*, ſay they, lies *all our power*. (Let us liſten, now, for God's ſake, to their ca-
balſ!)—UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION AND REPRE-
" SENTATIVE LEGISLATURE. Yet we are confi-
" dent, that on the pivot of this principle (the *pivot* of the *principle* of *the four words!*) a Con-
" vention,—ſtill leſs,—a ſociety,—leſs ſtill,—a ſin-
" gle

" gle man—(*any* ſingle man of the ſociety is it—or only ſome prime enchanter?) will be able firſt " to *move*, and then to *raiſe* the world." Without ſtopping to bow before theſe improvers upon Archimedes, or to wonder at the power of their miraculous pivot, out-doing ſo far the wooden peg of *Malumbruno* or *Pactolet*, let us try to find out what this fame pivot is made of, as a means of diſcovering *how* it is to be faſtened, and how twirled about, in the *head* of that (otherwiſe) lifeleſs animal, the people, whom theſe knights, ſquires and magicians, are to ride and guide, it ſeems, through the moſt aerial regions of reform.*

The

* See the renowned hiſtories of *Don Quixcte* and of *Valentine and Orſon*. See alſo the Circular Letter of the Society, of the 30th of December, 1791. " We again entreat you to " look around for men fit to form thoſe *ſtable ſupports* on " which *Ireland* may reſt *the Lever of Liberty*. If there be " but *ten*, take thoſe ten. If there be but *two*, take thoſe " two. (If there be but *one*, I ſuppoſe they may make a *Pivot* or a *Pactolet* of him) and truſt with confidence to the " ſincerity of your intention, the juſtice of your cauſe, and " the ſupport of your country."

Archimedes again!—Firſt, I ſuppoſe, *the fit men* in the country ſocieties are to form the ſupport or *fulcrum* of liberty-lever,

The gentlemen deſcribe, themſelves, " the *capa-* " *city* and *comprehenſion* of this their *beloved* princi- " ple," by means of whoſe, I ſuppoſe, equally beloved pivot, they are, collectively or individually, to work ſuch wonders. No wonder they melt at the very idea, when " it takes in every individu- " al (*every man*, and *every woman too*,—ſeriouſly, it does;—but its all in the way of *principle*;) " of the Iriſh nation;"—embraces them all;—caſts an equal, and honeſt, eye over every mother and mother's ſon of them;——" embraces

lever, which Ireland is to hold in her *own* hand,—when ſhe gets *properly* perſonified or embodied. Then the mother ſociety above here, or ſome ſingle child of her's, is to clap in the *pivot*, on which and round which, and up and down, and every way (it being a well-fitted pivot, and the lever a well-made lever) the whole is to turn:—and then Ireland and this ſociety, or her " ſingle man" or man-child, will agree which of them ſhall hold the lever, and twirl the pivot, and how they are to uſe both, and to uſe each other,——and the whole will be ſettled;——and *the world* will be *moved*, and *raiſed*, and *kept up*, at any height required by the ſpectators;—and one end of the lever will be up,—and the other end then *cannot be down!*—O rare philoſophy! Benign and great ſpirit of *More*, and divine ſpirit of *Plato*, how eclipſed are your lofty viſions! Hear of *our* Republic, and *our* Utopia, and bluſh for the cold barrenneſs of your hearts and imaginations!

" all

" all that *think* (and do *not* think) and feels for " all that *ſuffer* (and do *not* ſuffer!)"—If this be not philanthropy,—where, on earth, is philanthropy to be found?—If this be not *all* " in the ſincerity of their ſouls," where does ſincerity exiſt?

But not only does it ſeem that, to emancipate all,—*all* are *actually* to be repreſented in the legiſlature;—it is laid down that our *whole legiſlature* muſt be *repreſentative*. If the words, " a repreſentative legiſlature," mean any thing leſs than this,—that we are to have literally, and *bona fide*, a *French conſtitution*,—a *repreſentative democracy*,—then have words no meaning. It was no more *neceſſary* that the " whole power" of the ſociety ſhould reſide " in *four* words" than in five, or in ſix, or in any other number, however innocent or good kind of words they might be. It cannot be conceived that the expence of a few words more, to expreſs their *real meaning* in, would ſeem ſo great to gentlemen, who, if not maſters of *words*, are maſters of nothing under heaven. Nor is it obviouſly to be conceived, that a mere fondneſs for the quaint, the far-fetched, and the *outré*, or an infantine fondneſs for a coral-and-bells, would tempt a whole

whole ſociety to repeat, and repeat again, words conveying a *perfectly different meaning* from what the thinking, or rather leading part of it, *intended* either to be expreſſed or to be collected from them, " A repreſentative legiſlature is the *polar* " *ſtar* of our political ſalvation* :"—" *Natural* " *right*, too, and *eternal juſtice* ought EVER, we are " told, to be eſtabliſhed *without compromiſe or reſer-* " *vation*†." Yet *entire natural right*, and *artificial* or *political orders* ſeem, at firſt ſight, a little at variance; and that they are as much ſo in their *effects* as in *principle*, theſe gentlemen ſufficiently unfold. " *Every other rank*," we are told, " *conſpires*" with the Houſe of Commons againſt *the people*—" againſt their *privileges*, their *plea-* " *ſures*, their *homely happineſs*, their *fire-ſide enjoy-*

* Addreſs to other Societies of United Iriſhmen, November the 30th, 1792. See alſo the addreſs to the Delegates of Reform in Scotland, November the 23d, 1793. " *Univerſal emancipation with repreſentative legiſlature*, is the polar principle which guides our ſociety, and ſhall guide it, through all the tumult of factions and fluctuation of parties." See alſo *the four words* in the addreſs to the Citizen Soldiers November the 30th, 1792.

† Addreſs to the Friends of the People at London, October the 26th, 1792.

" *ments.*"—Juſt heaven! what *fiends*, what *devils*, does this thing called *rank* or *privileged order* make of mankind,—if this be the deſcription of its *rage* againſt the people who ſupport them?—And if, as theſe gentlemen tell us, theſe higher ranks are but " the balluſtrades which *adorn* the arch,"—if they do not form *any part* of what, as a cement at leaſt, "*ſupports*" the arch,—and if they thus demoniacally conſpire againſt the whole happineſs of the unfortunate, devoted people, who, *without any recompence*, it ſeems, or *any political uſe* or *neceſſity*, ſupport *them*,—why!—why I aſk, ſhould the people allow ſuch a deſtructive ornament, for an inſtant, to continue? Why ſhould " natural right and eternal juſtice," for an inſtant, be " compromiſed" or deferred? and why ſhould not " a *national* Houſe " of Commons, in its origin, its form, its features, " and its ſpirit, reverencing the people, and not " conſpiring, with every other rank, againſt " them*"—why ſhould not *ſuch* a Houſe of Commons be eſtabliſhed; and when eſtabliſhed, why ſhould it not extirpate thoſe hordes of conſpirators againſt the people and againſt itſelf?—Why ſhould it not ſweep away thoſe uſeleſs and de-

* Addreſs to the Iriſh Nation, January the 25th, 1793.

ſtructive

ſtructive ornaments,—a king, and lords, and landlords, and gentlemen,—eſtabliſh *natural right* in its full and unmixed, and impreſcriptible, and incontroulable ſovereignty,—eſtabliſh in fine, " liberty and equality,—or, in *two* words (which are but the half of four)—eſtabliſh " *repreſentative legiſlature*,"—which would ſoon eſtabliſh *all the reſt?*

Well!—and ſuppoſe they *did* eſtabliſh *liberty* and *equality?*—They are no bad things,—permit us to tell you; and we ſhall prove it. And ſuppoſe we did " level" *a little?* That is no bad thing either,—if done with wiſdom. Let us hear.—" It is *only* by *the military array* of men " in whom the people confide, (the Volunteers) " that *obedience* can be ſecured to *exiſting law* in " the *ſpeedy reſurrection* of a *free Conſtitution*,— " of *liberty* and *equality*,—words which we uſe " for the purpoſe of repelling calumny, and of " ſaying, that,—by *liberty*, we never underſtood " *unlimited* freedom; nor by *equality*, the *levelling* " of property, nor the *deſtruction* of ſubordinati- " on*." For this the Conſtitution is much obliged to them:—ſay not even the French the ſame?

* Addreſs to Citizen Soldiers.

And might not men of much leſs ingenuity than theſe gentlemen, *act* as the French have done, or ever propoſed to do, and defend themſelves on the letter, perhaps on the ſpirit, of theſe phraſes? They are not for *unlimited* freedom,—unleſs it be "*natural* right *without compromiſe or reſervation.*" But if compromiſe they muſt,—*what limits* will they allow? They have not yet *expreſsly* told us. It is hoped they will. In the mean time, we muſt try to *conjecture* what they are likely to be, from the *hints* they have thrown out, and the neceſſary or natural *implications*, that evidently lurk in their *profeſſion of faith*, given "for the purpoſe of repelling calumny," and therefore expreſſed, we are to ſuppoſe, ſo as clearly to convey their meaning. It *may* be no part of their ſyſtem "to *level* property," —that is, *utterly* to level *all* property; but an *Agrarian law*, or many other laws uſeful in republics, and occaſionally moſt uſeful in revolutions, might remove *much* of the preſent inequalities of property. As little may they intend to deſtroy *all* ſubordination. There can be no government without *ſome* ſubordination. France herſelf *eſtabliſhes* what ſhe calls the ſubordination of virtue, induſtry, and talents;—ſubordination to *elected magiſtrates*,—to *public functionaries*;

ries ;—ſubordination to them *while* permitted to *be* magiſtrates or functionaries ;—ſubordination to them,—*till* the next revolution.—But where, here, is any ſubordination reſerved to *ranks* and *orders?* To *hereditary* legiſlators—not to ſpeak of *a king* ;—neither of them, ſurely, *parts* of " a repreſentative legiſlature,"—nor *conſiſtent*, either of them, with the *unreſerved* and *uncompromiſing* eſtabliſhment of " natural right?"—If the king and the lords were removed, would this deſtroy *ſubordination ?*—No !—they might tell us,—there might be another and better, and truly natural ſubordination,—which could not ſuffer, but would be eſtabliſhed by their deſtruction.—Would their removal deſtroy *property?*—" Still leſs."—The removal of both would ſave money to the nation*;" and give it, (viz. its *then* honeſt rulers) a property to divide.—Would their removal be *levelling?* " Leſs ſtill."—" As if *the only leveller* was not the *deſpot*, who cruſhes with an iron ſceptre *every*

* I am told it was thrown out in the Northern Star, a Belfaſt news-paper, that when the nation had *a reform*, the poor people would have tobacco at *four pence a pound*; in other words, *duty-free*. This was an argument well put. And if a reform would do ſo much, what might not a revolution do?

rank

rank and degree of ſociety into one*!"—Nothing, we have ſeen, is public liberty that is not *perfect* public liberty;—nothing a Conſtitution, that is not a *perfect* Conſtitution; ſo nothing levels, that does not bring *all* to a *dead-level;* and *none* but this dead-level is, it ſeems, a conſtitutional or political evil! Theſe gentlemen then, are not *levellers;* not one of them, we rejoice in admitting, is yet a deſpot, at leaſt in power.—But while they deny that any of them is a King or an Emperor, they ſeem inclined to go as far as they well can, in confeſſing themſelves of the oppoſite deſcription,—to wit, *republicans*. "They "are *ſo far* republicans, as to deſire a *national* "Houſe of Commons——not *conſpiring*,—with "*every other rank*,—againſt *the people*, their privi-"leges, pleaſures, &c."——Such patriots as they, believing ſo ſolemnly in *ſuch* a conſpiracy againſt the people, could have no violent objection, one ſhould think, to remove *entirely* the *ranks* which conſpire, as well as the nominal repreſentatives who by them are ſeduced into the conſpiracy. If theſe conſpiring ranks were deſcribed by them as any thing better than *mere* and *expenſive ornaments*, of the Conſtitution, we might think other-

* Addreſs to the Iriſh Nation, January the 25th, 1793.

wiſe.

wiſe. And we ſhould be in abſolute deſpair, and ſhould expect the entire and immediate diſſolution of the Conſtitution, if we were not aſſured of their attachment to *one* part, *one* "fundamental principle of the Conſtitution,"—(and it is the *only* part, beſides the elective franchiſe of the people, on which I recollect them to have expreſſed themſelves with any feeling, bordering on enthuſiaſm or even approbation:)—it is—*that* "*republican* or *democratic energy*," which, "as well as "ariſtocratical privilege, or regal prerogative, is "ſanctioned by the fundamental principles of the "Conſtitution, by all thoſe memorable precedents "which form its firſt features; and by which the "juſt and virtuous ſtruggles of our anceſtors, re-"cognized by ſucceſſive generations, *point out to* "*us their poſterity*, WHEN *they ought to* INTERPOSE, "*and* HOW LONG *they ought to* SUFFER*." Whether they think *this* the time to interpoſe,—or that the nation ſhould *longer ſuffer*,—and *how* they would interpoſe,—the whole tenor and ſpirit of their addreſſes, to countrymen and to ſolicited confederates, to *Citizen Soldiers*, and to *the ſoldiers of ſeduction* may ſomewhat explain.

* Addreſs to the Iriſh Nation, January the 25th, 1793.

That

That this is pretty nearly the time for the people to interpoſe, we are ſcarce permitted to doubt, when we read their *counter-proclamation**, —"Citizen Soldiers, TO ARMS!"—"We will not "at this day, ſay they, condeſcend to quote au- "thorities for the right of having and of uſing "arms (I ſuppoſe, of uſing, and of declaring an intention of uſing them, in *any poſſible manner?*) "but we will *cry aloud*, even amidſt the ſtorm "raiſed by the witchcraft of a proclamation, that "to your formation was owing the peace and pro- "tection of this iſland, (ſo far true:) That to "your relaxation (which was almoſt as neceſſary as theirformation) has been owing its relapſe in- "to *impotence* and *inſignificance*,—(a relapſe which has not yet happened;)—to your *renovation* muſt "be owing its *future freedom*, and its *preſent tran-* "*quillity*. You are therefore ſummoned *to arms*.— "IN ORDER to preſerve your country in that guard- "ed quiet, which may ſecure it from *external hoſ-* "*tility*, and to maintain that *internal regimen* "*throughout the land*, which, *ſuperſeding* a noto- "rious police, or a ſuſpected militia, may preſerve "the bleſſings of peace, by *a vigilant preparation*

* Addreſs to the Volunteers of Ireland, publiſhed in December, 1792.

for war."—What *ſpecies* of *war* was to be prepared for,—what ſpecies of "*internal regimen*" ſeems intended,—whether the inſinuated purpoſe was to guard againſt "*external* hoſtility," may be collected from their denouncing, at the ſame moment, "a *ſuſpected—Fencible Militia*,"—from ſummoning *their* ſoldiers (they ſuppoſe them) to arm "*in ſpite*" of ſuch a militia, "and in *virtue* (ingenious virtue!) of two proclamations" —(one of them iſſued againſt men arming on the very principles of this ſummons of alarm; —*the National Guards*)—and from the wiſh which "they *cannot help*" expreſſing, "that all "ſoldiers, partaking the paſſions (yes, the *paſſions!*) "and intereſt of the people, would *remember*, that "they were *once* citizens,—that *ſeduction* made "them ſoldiers,—but *nature* made them men." —It is, one ſhould think, rather a new way of "preparing" for a *foreign* war, to perſuade the ſoldiers that it is their *duty* to *deſert*. It is rather a ſymptom that the country itſelf is internally "in danger,"—but not *merely* from its bad government,—when ſoldiers, who had taken an oath of fidelity to their king, are to be *leſſoned* into the chriſtian caſuiſtry that their duty to man, to nature, or the God of nature, now requires of them a *holy, civic per-*

jury. This indeed is *vigilance*,—this indeed is *preparation*;—it is morality, it is patriotism, it is religion! It would be the very thing they profess to aim at,—"*internal regimen throughout the land*;"—the regimen of such men as can hold, or continue to be seduced by such language;——the wretched tyranny of wretched tyrants and (were it not for their delusion and innocence) their still more wretched slaves.

But it would answer little purpose thus to prepare the soldiers of every description for this *empire of peace*, if the people at large were not with equal vigilance prepared for it. To them, therefore, *one and all*, it became necessary, it should seem, to dispense a revelation of *glad-tidings*, not more new than it is extraordinary, summed up in that most convenient and most comprehensive, and no doubt, most palatable, of all popular principles, —that *they ought to be able to do with impunity*—only—*whatever they pleased to do*;—no more!—These amiable, tender-hearted gentlemen, these friends to liberty without licentiousness, to *the Constitution*, and to *No-Constitution* of their country, "WISH, they tell the people, *to* "PROSCRIBE *such an incongruous and monstrous* "*conjunction*

" *conjunction of terms as* PENAL LAW, *not only* " *from a digeſt of the laws, but from the dictionary* " *of the language* !*" But we may paſs this by, as a piece of ſuch precious nonſenſe, that ignorance and turbulence themſelves, all the demons of diſcord and all the furies united, could not have ſent it into the world, had they conſidered, for a ſingle moment, the conſequences of ſuch a declared doctrine *to their own character*, if they were as indifferent as demons and furies could be, to all its conſequences on *the opinions and conduct of the people.* Independent, however, of this rhapſody,——this flight of genius, ſcorning and ſoaring above *all art* and *cunning* too,—they tell the people what *their Society*, emphatically, " *does deſire*†," and what they the people muſt deſire too and inſiſt on, no doubt,—" if not ſunk in the lethar- " gy of corruption."—" Yes, countrymen, ſay " they, we do deſire that *extended liberty*, which " may allow you, as citizens, to do *what you* " *will*,—provided you do not injure another, or

* Addreſs to the Iriſh Nation, January the 25th, 1793, on the abſolute neceſſity of provincial and national conventions.

† Ibid.

" rather to do *all the good you can to others*,—
" without doing injuſtice to yourſelves." That there is an innocent and conſtitutional ſenſe in which theſe words may be taken, and that many who approved, underſtood them, if they underſtood them at all, in ſome ſuch ſenſe, I am not diſpoſed to deny:—but neither, I think, can it be denied, that the words bear alſo a ſenſe and application much more flattering to the popular mind, and which the people, lectured and addreſſed as they here are, would be much more likely to adopt than the conſtitutional and ſafe one. This " extended power of doing what they " will,—all the good they can, &c."—they would probably chuſe to enjoy, ſubject to limitations of which *they the people only* ſhould be the judges; —which would get rid of all *unreaſonable controul*, all the *conſpiracies* of other ranks againſt them, and *only* make them *the ſovereign*, and the government a democracy. The very next ſentence ſeems to put out of doubt the meaning, or at leaſt the probable effect, of theſe words. " Yes countrymen, we do wiſh for an *equality of* " *rights*, which is *conſtitutional*,—not an equality " of *property*, which is *impoſſible*." The rights of *the loweſt commoner*, it ſhould ſeem then, are to be equal to thoſe of the *Lord of Parliament*, and

and the rights of both lord and peaſant to thoſe of *the king?* we ſhall then, no doubt, *have* and *keep* a king and lords; for theſe peaſants and commoners of all kinds will never find out that *inequality* is not *equality*; nor will any body ever whiſper in their ear,—that *lords* are but *men*, or that the crown is become "*a crown of thorns*," as our ſociety have on ſome occaſion, well deſcribed it. —"Yes, countrymen, we *do long for*, (how they wax warm in kind-heartedneſs!) we *do* long for "*another equality* and *we hope yet to ſee it realiz-* "*ed.*"—(Now, indeed, comes "the new order of things!")——An equality conſiſting in the "power of *every father of a family* to acquire, "by labour, either of body or mind, ſomething "beyond a mere ſubſiſtence,—ſome little capital "to prove, in caſe of ſickneſs, old age, or miſ- "fortune, a ſafe-guard for his body and his ſoul, "a hallowed hoard, that may lift him above the "hard neceſſity which ſtruggles between conſcience "and corruption; that may keep his heart whole "and his ſpirit erect, while his body bends be- "neath its burden; make him fling away the wages "of venality, and proudly return to an humble "home, where *a conſtitution that looks* ALIKE *on the* "*palace and the hovel*,—may ſtand at his hearth, "a tutelar divinity, and ſpread the Egis of equal "law,

" law, to guard him from the revenge of thoſe " who offered him the bribe, and offered it in " vain.*."

Is this addreſſed to *the people*, or is it not? And in what climate, in what country, in what ſublunary world, and under what diſpenſation of creative or governing wiſdom, have we been born and do we live, if this old new *golden age*,—this dream of poetry, this deſpair of philanthropy, philoſophy and common-ſenſe, *can* be " realized" among us?—And, *if realized it cannot be;* —if, among us, *under every conceivable conſtitution*, there muſt be crowds of perſons weak in body, in mind, and in means even of ſubſiſtence,—weak in one or all of theſe, from nature, from habits, or from accident,—unable to " hoard," happy to be able to live,—expoſed to temptations, becauſe they are men, and to injuries, becauſe others alſo are men,—if palaces and hovels, ſo long as nature is nature, and property exiſts, there *muſt* be,—if *no equality of law* can make the palace a hovel, or the hovel a palace,—can, *in every thing* equalize their protection, or, to the eye of the world at leaſt, or

* Addreſs to the Iriſh Nation, January the 25th, 1793.

perhaps in any view, can equalize their enjoyments ;—what ſhall we ſay of the men,—if they had conſidered,—if they knew what they do,—(which, ſurely a great majority of them do not!) —who take from the unhappy poor even the ſlender and precarious enjoyments allotted them ;—who poiſon the little happineſs within their reach, by teaching them to graſp at phantoms not in nature—who take from them cheerful induſtry and humble content, and moderated or repreſſed paſſions, and kindneſs to neighbours and gratitude to benefactors, while they inſpire them with idle and often rapacious and unprincipled diſcontent, ferocious animoſities, and brooding ſentiments not of unthankfulneſs merely, but hatred and revenge; who teach them, that evils of life, and of their fortune, are owing *entirely* to the intolerable oppreſſion of a tyrannical conſtitution, to a wicked and ſyſtematic conſpiracy of all the rich and all the great againſt their domeſtic, and homely, and, God knows, little enviable happineſs ?—What language is adequate to the branding of practices, which, at a time of ſuch ferment, when almoſt every thing ſeemed practicable, nothing impoſſible, if men but dared to ruſh forward,—play before the eyes of the ignorant and unwary multitude ſuch diſtracting illuſions ;

ſions; ſcattering firebrands, ſcattering ambiguities; now bolting out ſome tremendous maxim, as in ſcorn of caution, now feebly explaining or half-retracting, not as in candour, but as if the covering were to be viſibly affected, and ſtill leaving the original ſtrong impreſſions to work their way into the popular heart, and to be there, in the moſt poiſonous ſenſe perhaps, received and cheriſhed, nay, to acquire new venom, and perfect fatality, from the uncultivated judgments and excited frenzies to which they are addreſſed and accommodated.

Such are the principal opinions and ſentiments with which their country and the world have been favoured, by this wonder-working ſociety. They ſpeak ſufficiently, it ſhould ſeem, the *kind* of reform they would aim at, and the *means* they would uſe. That the workmanſhip exceeds the materials, their ſtile the ſentiment, cannot be ſaid, where both are incomparable. The paſſages quoted ſhew, that they ſuit each other to a miracle—"*conjurant amicè*" may be ſaid of them to the very letter. As they hold out France forever, as a ſort of inſpired inſtructor and perfect model,—ſo muſt they forever ſpeak *her language;*—our *own,*—the language of *Britain,*—that language,

Heavens!

Heavens! which bore our Milton through Pandemonium, through Chaos, and through the Empyrean,—which raiſed his Satan, and his Devils, as far above the Gods of the mighty Homer himſelf, as our religion is above brutality,—*this* language wants nerve, wants fire, wants ſoul, to expreſs the immortal conceptions of every ſtrutting devotee of modern manhood!——Hence does this auguſt ſociety take every "affiliated ſociety" under her maternal wings.—Hence, when ſhe ſends forth her epiſtles, paſtoral or evangelical,—"*you have our ideas.* Anſwer us, and that quick-"ly. *This is not a time to procraſtinate.*" Hence are our Volunteers called on, as from the dead, by the powerful incantation of—*Citizen Soldiers;*—hence do city journeymen-manufacturers ſtart into *National Guards.*—For "laws amidſt arms," we have "liberty and equality;"—and, for a Conſtitution including a ſovereign to whom we reſtored that inſignificant, unhappy thing, *a free kingdom*, we have *a harp* (an unſtrung, bloody harp!) *without a crown**. Hence is almoſt every thing

* "*Inter arma Leges*"——one of the mottoes of the Lawyer's Corps.—"Liberty and Equality," it is ſaid, with the device of a Bonnet of Liberty, and a pike—(their enemies

thing an *organ* which is no actual part of our Conſtitution, nothing *organized*, it ſhould ſeem, that is ſo. The *ſociety* is every way reſpectable, —becauſe they " ſit, *without mace or beadle ;*"— *Parliament* is only to be laughed at,—being " a " *myſtery*, a *craft*, a *corporation.*" And hence the ſun himſelf, our good old drudge the ſun, who does our ordinary buſineſs pretty punctually and well, and for whom it is not clear we have yet " *a ſubſtitute*,"—even he will not be permitted to *ſhine* on a *county meeting*,—unleſs it meet in the form of an *electoral body* deputed by *primary aſſemblies*. If met in any other way, or for any other purpoſe than to chuſe Delegates to a Provincial Convention, or as preparatory to a National one, the freeholders, however numerous,— even after " three millions" have entered " the " temple" of the Conſtitution,—can be but " a " *few* freeholders *ſhivering* in the *corner* of a " county hall,"—without *right* or *competency* to expreſs the authoritative will of the nation,—

called it a dagger) and a Harp without a Crown, were among the intended enſigns of the National Guards.—It is but fair to mention that theſe (if they really exiſted, as deſcribed) were no otherwiſe imputable to the Society ſpoken of, than as conſequences of the unregulated zeal of ſome of its members, or ſome individuals of the multitude infected by its extravagances.

and,

and, it ſhould ſeem, from the contempt with which they are treated as an *ordinary* or *recognized* body in the Conſtitution, without right to declare, or power to contribute to the public cauſe by declaring, *their own* will or opinion*. From the ſame cau.e alſo, and from the inſinuated *promiſe* of a community *perfectly equalized*, has the

* " Truſt as little to your friends as to your enemies in a " matter where *you can act only by yourſelves.* The Will of " the Nation muſt be declared before any Reform can take " place. It is not therefore any claſs however numerous, any " ſociety however reſpectable, any ſubaltern aſſembly, that " have either right or competency to expreſs that authorita- " tive will. *Nothing leſs than the people can ſpeak for the* " *people.*—This competency reſides not in a few freeholders " ſhivering in the corner of a county hall, but only in the " whole community repreſented *in* each county (as at preſent " in Antrim) by parochial delegation, and then *from* each " county by baronial delegation, to provincial conventions, " the *union* of which muſt form the awful will of the people " of Ireland."—Addreſs to Citizen Soldiers.

Thus, we ſee *the nation* means repreſentatives ſent to *a National Convention*, by the French mode of election;—and *its will* the will of *theſe repreſentatives*. Yet the nation is to do *every thing for itſelf*;—to truſt *neith friend nor foe*,——in other words, to truſt no living ſoul *except* the men, and the creatures and devotees of the men, who give advice ſo *diſintereſted* ſo *ſafe* and ſo *practicable*.

little addition of *Esquire*, heretofore not absolutely despised, at least in the country, and almost as "good cheap" as that of *gentleman* in the law, —been so discredited and discarded, that the *Squire* of the parish himself cannot venture to use it on a Sunday; and every *friend of the people* that is clapped into a *resolution-chair*, whatever be his title, or whatever his trade, steps ye forward into the world,—with a most charming modesty,—plain *himself*,—plain *Coriolanus*, in other words, or plain *Cato!*—Hence too has a society, which poor Mr. Young, the philosophical farmer, takes, in his fright, for *a Jacobin Club*, been almost ruined in character in the North for no better or more *constitutional* reason, that I have been able to find out, than because they are *not* Jacobins,—because "they are not violent enough" —and because they have *a Duke* at their head, and a few Members of Parliament of their body. —Hence has the imagination of the people been seduced, and hence, if the seduction should continue, would even the morality of the people be corrupted, by the general following of a sort of stile (*composition*, it may be truly called) which Sparta would have despised as unmanly, Athens as tasteless and vicious; one so spiced and bepeppered, that it must render the mental palate

callous, at length, to every thing not irritating and inflaming, to every thing ſimple, nutritious, and digeſtive into common-ſenſe, and preſerving the tone of natural feeling; a ſtile of *centos* and fragments, raked from the degeneracies of ancient Rome, or copied,—*polygraphed*, I was going to ſay,—from the affectations of ſickly France; —bloated, ſtilted, theatric, mountebank, falſe; —ever ſtraining after the ſplendid, not content with even the luminous, if it have the misfortune to be ſolid;—ſubſtituting jingle for ſenſe, ſtage-trick for grace, rant for feeling, witticiſm for warmth, and a play of fire-works for eloquence; ſacrificing truth itſelf to ſome unhappy antitheſis, and riſking the peace of an empire for an alliteration.

The labours of this ſociety approached their criſis or conſummation, when the ſummons to arms iſſued to the Citizen Soldiers. Government and the people ſeemed now fairly at iſſue—That "*committal* of national character ſeemed already "made,"—which once made,—though ever ſo raſhly,—the nation had been told, by the very perſons who thus committed them, they could not retreat, unleſs with "infamy and oblivion." —We then had *only*, it ſeemed, "*to advance*

"*with*

" *with active, not passive perseverance*, with man-
" ly confidence and calm determination, smil-
" ing with equal scorn at the bluster of official
" arrogance, and the whisper of private malevo-
" lence,—*until we had planted the flag of freedom*
" *on the summit, and were at once victorious and*
" *secure**."

Not to be alarmed at such a state of things, not to take some measures to avert the impending calamities, seemed blindness, or insensibility, or neutrality, or conspiracy. A new society, " the Friends of the Constitution, Liberty and Peace," now therefore came forward with an address to the nation, certainly not a faultless one, nor thought so by themselves, but which it seemed necessary to hazard, however hasty or imperfect, in order to save the Constitution from perhaps instant danger, and to avert the horrors of a civil war from the nation. I mention the circumstance, not for the purpose of defending this society against the misapprehensions even of so respectable a man and writer as Mr. Young, nor with the paltry view of raising *its* charac-

* Address to the Delegates for Reform in Scotland, November the 23d, 1792.

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ter by depreſſing that of the ſociety whoſe conduct I am treating with, I think, neceſſary ſeverity;—but for the purpoſe of mentioning *a fact* worthy of ſome attention, in the ſubject before us;—that, at the moment when this declaration of the Friends of the Conſtitution, &c. was publiſhed, they knew not that the Conſtitution itſelf, which they bound themſelves perſonally to defend, would ſtand many months. Some of them had reaſon to fear,—on the authority of information, not raſhly, they thought, to be deſpiſed,—that the attempt might *then* be *too late*; that the opinions and views of a great majority of the people were then become decidedly and determinedly republican; that a reform, having been ſo long deferred, would not then *ſatisfy* the people; and that an attempt to ſtem or turn this popular torrent, would be fruitleſs as to the Conſtitution, and probably deſtructive to the feeble oppoſers. The experiment, however, ſeemed worth the hazard;—and it was made, with that mixed anxiety, reſolution, and exultation, which marked no vulgar attachment to country, and to that Conſtitution which was to confirm its liberty and enſure its peace. If the declaration of this ſociety did not ſave the Conſtitution, or preſerve peace, it aſſuredly *contributed* to both theſe purpoſes,

poſes, or *tended*, at leaſt, to compoſe that ferment in the popular mind, the conſequences of which, perhaps, no man could foreſee.

A reform, as well as the preſervation of the Conſtitution, a reform indeed, even as a means of preſerving the Conſtitution,—having become an object, it ſeemed neceſſary to bring back within the limits of conſtitutional purſuit, thoſe who, from whatever cauſe or motive, had ſtrayed from the path, and whoſe errors might, it was thought, do eſſential injury, either by miſleading their ſuppoſed numerous followers, or by alienating the timid or cautious friends of reform.——Some reputed leaders among our United Iriſhmen were therefore requeſted to explain, if they would not retract, certain paſſages in their Citizen-Soldier manifeſto; particularly the phraſe "a Repreſentative Legiſlature," the impropriety of which ſeemed not to have been conſidered, and to be then admitted; and it was hoped that ſomething of this kind might have been done. But there are, in proportion, ſtill fewer ſocieties than individuals, who conſider either the duty, or the point of honour, of retracting an error; and it is probable that neither the general cenſure paſſed by the new ſociety on *ſedition*, *levelling tenets*, and *intemperance*,

intemperance, nor the profecution then juſt commenced againſt two members of the United Iriſhmen, for diſtributing this very addreſs to the Citizen Soldiers, contributed to diſpoſe theſe gentlemen to the meaſure recommended;—or if ſome of them were ſo diſpoſed, their voice was drowned in the crowd.

Inſtead therefore of any explanation, or any thing amounting to an explanation, of expreſſions either obnoxious or miſconceived;—inſtead of any reſolution to ſupport—(no matter whether from mere abſtract opinion, or from conviction of political propriety and expediency)—our Conſtitution, when reformed;—inſtead of any declaration that they would ſupport the *Monarchy*, and *the Houſe of Peers* which, after their repeated homage to principles apparently tending to ſubvert theſe branches of the legiſlature, it might be natural enough to have expected, or required from them;—the ſociety,—to remove "the *art-*"*fully* and *groundleſsly-excited* fears" of "well-"intentioned and ſincere friends of reform,"—declared only, that the object "of their inſtitu-"tion was (it might be thought they meant to ſay it *then* was, and even then it might ſeem, perhaps, not their *only* object) an *impartial* and *adequate*

" Repreſentation in Parliament*." A repreſentation which, if taken with all their previouſly declared political opinions, commentaries, effuſions, and hints, might well paſs for *a legiſlature entirely* and *abſolutely repreſentative*, if not in its *direct inſtitution*, yet in its *neceſſary conſequences*. The nation, it ſeemed, was to be repreſented *per capita*, or individually and actually,—which would be " *impartial ;*"—and it was ſcarce to be *ſuppoſed*, that any thing leſs than a purely repreſentative legiſlature would be " *adequate*" to the purpoſes of that " *extended* liberty,"—that " *equality* of *rights*,"—that *perfectly equal* independence, protection, happineſs, &c. &c.—(not to mention the proſcription of *penal law*)—which the people had been taught to expect from what it was thought proper to call the *reformed* or *renovated* Conſtitution.

But the ſociety did worſe than *not explain* their former publication, or their miſ-conceived and calumniated opinions. They reſolved, that " it " was the *duty* of every member to diſtribute their " public reſolutions ;" and that, if the gentlemen accuſed really diſtributed *that* addreſs, " they, " in ſo doing, acted agreeable to the ſentiments, and " therefore merited the approbation of the ſociety."

* Reſolutions of December the 23d, 1792.

Thus

Thus did they reſolve,—either that the addreſs was in itſelf, defenſible and proper; or that it was the duty of every member of their ſociety to diſtribute *all* their reſolutions, *however improper or indefenſible*. The latter principle they cannot profeſs; for it would, morally ſpeaking, ſomething more than qualify them for the ſociety of Botany Bay. It would be profeſſing themſelves *Men of the Mountain*—conſpirators againſt all mankind, or againſt all whoſe intereſt and views differed from their's, or thoſe of their leaders. They muſt then have adopted the former opinion, which defends their addreſs as *proper in itſelf;* and it reſts with the public to judge of them, as a ſociety, by what they have publiſhed, and by what, even after warning and admonition, they continue to defend.

But perhaps we miſtake this matter all the while, and they are a marvelous proper, and moſt conſtitutional ſociety, and have nothing to anſwer for, unleſs it be an original ſin of an uncommon ſort, one acquired, not loſt, at their political baptiſm. From the day of the birth of the ſociety (I think they ſomewhere tell us the very day) to that ſtill more auſpicious one, when they *out-manifeſtoed*, if I may not ſay *out-lawed*, the king and our lord lieutenant, they *did*, they *publiſhed*—

nothing in the leaſt degree improper;—nothing under heaven,—and, *for proof* if you require proof,—lo,—(as they ſay) *their teſt*, " adopted " on *the eſtabliſhment* of the ſociety, and uniform-" ly taken by every member on his admiſſion :" a proof as ſatisfactory, as if, on an indictment for any little offence, ſuch as treaſon, murder, &c. it were given in evidence, that the fact was *impoſſible;* for that the young gentleman, the priſoner, was *born* ſomewhat above twenty-one years before, and that *then* he was a ſweet little cherub; that he cried a little, indeed, at times, and did his beſt to diſturb the nurſe and the family, but that he was not able to make much noiſe, and upon the whole, was as innocent as any of their lordſhips on the bench. With *ſuch* a defence the court and jury could not but be ſatisfied: it muſt diſarm even thoſe mercileſs " ſolicitors of law and " general attorny's," who, we are told*, " nearly blaſted in their cradle" theſe gentle babes,—

" The moſt repleniſhed *ſweet work of nature.*
" ——————————*girding one another*
" *Within their innocent alabaſter arms!*—
" A *book of prayers* upon their pillow!"—

There is, we're told, a wiſe bird, the Oſtrich, and another bird called (from its wiſdom, I do

* Addreſs to the Nation, January 25th, 1793.

ſuppoſe) *the Dotterel*, which, if cloſely purſued, hide their head, a little beyond the eyes, in ſome buſh, and then think themſelves as ſafe and as ſnug, as if neither feather nor hinder-parts were expoſed to ſhot or diſcovery. It would be unſportſman-like, it would be a crying ſin, to ſhoot at the poor animals in this their ſelf-ſatisfied ſtate of ſecurity and compoſure; but, ſurely, it is not required of human virtue—not to laugh at them.

LETTER

LETTER V.

I THINK I have now ſhewn that if there did not exiſt in this country *a ſpirit of republicaniſm* that might endanger the Conſtitution, there had at leaſt appeared ſuch *ſymptoms* of that ſpirit, as juſtified a degree of apprehenſion, and required from the true friends of reform,—but particularly from all *extraordinary conventions* of the people or their delegates,—ſuch explicit declarations and ſtrong counteraction as might check the progreſs of dangerous opinions, remove ſuſpicion of their own motives, and promote that union, without which there is no ſtrength. It appears, I think, that a plain man *might* declare ſuch apprehenſions without its following inconteſtibly, that he either fabricated, or was infected by, "a miniſterial calumny" againſt the people.—I was prepared to have proved this at Dungannon, by reading paſſages from ſeveral of the publications I have criticiſed, and from a few others in the ſame ſpirit, which have appeared in the Northern Province, but particularly from the town of Belfaſt.

I thought

I thought at firſt it would be neceſſary to do in theſe letters, what I had intended partly to do at Dungannon; not only to trace the opinions I ſpeak of through the publications of the *Arch-ſociety* in town, the mother and inſtructreſs of all the little ones, but to ſhew, by other publications, that great bodies of the people appeared either to have been apt ſcholars, or to have anticipated their teachers. I am happy, however, to think I need not enter into ſo diſagreeable a detail.—The principles and opinions I ſhould condemn in certain people of the North, and thoſe I have already criticiſed in members of the Provincial Convention, and in the United Iriſhmen of this town, are ſo much the ſame, differing only in a little more or leſs of dreſs or colouring, of the wild or the extravagant, &c. &c. that any minute diſcuſſion of the former ſeems unneceſſary; and our United Iriſhmen here holding evidently the grand ſabbath of ſpells and infection, the expoſure of their myſteries, and of the "double-ſenſe," in which they juggle and palter with the objects of their deluſion, muſt undeceive the people, or nothing from me can.

But, beſides; not only the people in general who have been moſt forward in our late political warfare, but a great majority of the very

ſociety

ſociety which has chiefly miſled them, may well be ſuppoſed, *innocent* in their motives, and *pardonable* even in the exceptionable part of their conduct. The *general principles* on which they ſet out, making allowance for perhaps too much warmth, or for ſome unguardedneſs of expreſſion, natural to perſons dwelling in imagination on the public grievances which it is their profeſſed object to remove, appear to me not only praiſe-worthy, but highly ſo. It is only on account of *ſubſequent extremes and perverſions of thoſe principles*, that either reprobation or reprehenſion ſeems deſerved; and for theſe I conſider *the leaders only* as properly accountable.

That ſome, even of thoſe leaders, did not underſtand certain moſt exceptionable expreſſions and meaſures in their real and proper ſenſe, I have reaſon to believe. The allowances to be made for the manner in which the majority of *followers* underſtood theſe things may thence readily be conceived. Theſe gentlemen confide, in the general, much more than they criticiſe, and, ſo they are tickled, and dazzled, and confounded, they are content.—I can the more eaſily make allowances for the majority of this or any popular aſſembly, when I recollect that I attended myſelf very imperfectly to the ſpirit and tendency of theſe productions,

on

on haſtily reading them when they came out; nor ſhould I probably have perceived that *ſyſtem of pernicious principles* which they inculcate, had not the criſis which theſe, and ſimilar productions, brought on, and the hold which I found they had taken on the people, and above all, the proofs I have ſince had occaſion to attend to, of *a determined and continued reſolution*, in this ſociety, or ſome of its leaders, and adherents, *by all practicable means, to agitate and govern the popular mind**,—had not theſe circumſtances, I ſay, awaked

* Among theſe proofs I reckon the reprinting and publiſhing of ſome of the moſt exceptionable of their addreſſes, —particularly the ſummons to the Citizen Soldiers in more parts than one of the north. That to the nation, on the neceſſity of *Conventions*, publiſhed the 25th of January, and which contains ſo much of the precious eſſence of their principles, on penal law, levelling, popular interpoſition or inſurrection (when the people has ſuffered too long)—the equality they *do* long for, the golden-age they *do* promiſe,—the inſignificance, worthleſſneſs, and conſpiracies of the ranks and orders, &c. &c.—was ſent for republication to Newry, *ſince the Dungannon Convention*. I do not know whether the Printer choſe to proceed in it.—I allude alſo to attempts to calumniate and raiſe prejudices, *when neceſſary*, againſt the *principles* and "*civiſm*" of perſons who ſurely have gone *far enough*, in oppoſition to government, but who unfortu-

nately

ed my particular attention, and convinced me that either the principles adopted and propagated by this ſociety, muſt be expoſed, or a great part of the people muſt be allowed to continue in wretched and dangerous deluſion.

That our Conſtitution has conſiderable imperfections, and its adminiſtration, of courſe, conſiderable abuſes, ſeems as certain as that thouſands can ſee and feel the abuſes, for one that can either trace their true cauſes, judge of a ſafe remedy,—or compare the imperfections and advantages, and determine the degree in which one or other of them predominates. The depreſſion of our Catholics, as Catholics, and that of our whole People, as a People, began of late to appear to many Proteſtants to be the ſame; while, to ſome others, it appeared that a Reform alone would give to the people their due weight in the Conſtitution, but that the Reform was only to be had by the union of the whole people, which union,

nately have ſhewn ſome apprehenſion for the conſtitution and peace of the country. I reckon alſo among theſe proofs, the outcry raiſed againſt government for meaſures ſimply of *ſelf-defence*, and *reſiſtance to anarchy*, as well as of national defence againſt "*external* hoſtility."

again,

again, could only be had by making it an object to the Catholics to join in it. At all events, therefore, the removal of the Catholic penal laws seemed equally necessary, whether as a means or preparation for a Reform, or as in itself an ultimate object. It is a happy state of things where it is the *obvious interest* of man to do justice to his fellow-man. It saves a world of virtue;—a quality which it is more proper to believe in than prudent to depend on, as the sole, or principal agent, in any great scheme of public good.

These arguments for Catholic emancipation, true as they were in themselves, and peculiarly impressed as they have been on the minds of many, ever since Ireland recovered an independent legislature, and since that legislature appeared to be not as truly *National*, as it was *not British*, seemed to come home to every sense and feeling, and to warm conviction into passion, when the astonishing revolutions which the world had lately exhibited, and which appeared only indeed *in a train*, were dwelt on for a moment by any ardent mind.

The bold and dazling experiment of France raised and spread a flame of enthusiasm, which

 nothing,

nothing, perhaps, but the degeneracy of France herſelf into fanaticiſm and cruelty, could have repreſſed within the bounds of propriety or common-ſenſe. Twenty-four millions, not of rude and unlettered barbarians, but of men formed and cultivated by their country, by their climate, and by the magnificent profuſion and faſtidious delicacy of deſpotiſm itſelf, to ſcience, arts, taſte and refinement;—men ſo high in all theſe that the world ſpoke their language, without being ſubject to their empire;—men who taught Britain herſelf to glory in her own Conſtitution*;—and, after ſpeculating, under the maſk of lightneſs, on *liberty* as on *virtú*, had been led, by regal impolicy and national gallantry, to inhale her ſimple and ſublime ſpirit in America;—*ſuch a nation*, burſting in a moment the ſhackles of ages, and acquiring that *power* of ſelf-government, which it ſeemed as inconceivable they ſhould want the *ability*, as that any nation ſhould want the *will*, to uſe, for *their own true happineſs*;—this was a ſpectacle, which he who could behold without exultation at the new and immenſe career of happineſs that ſeemed opening to the human race itſelf, muſt have been wiſe indeed in the know-

* Monteſquieu in particular.

ledge

ledge of man, and chilled into caution by the severe philosophy of history, or he must have been shielded, in head and heart, by prejudices and passions the subjects of pity more than praise, or by honest and frequently self-pluming dullness, whose errors, if seldom fatal, are seldom generous.

To men neither of the first nor last of mortals —" longing after" a *state of perfection*, yet not recollecting that immortality alone could reveal such a state;—to many such men, their honest and ardent wishes appeared the next thing to proofs;—it appeared not impossible, and soon, from the self-deceptions of imagination, half-probable, that the *experiments* yet made in the moral and political world. were as imperfect as many in the physical world;—that no *conclusion* could be drawn from what had been to what might be;—that *new discoveries* were equally to be expected in all the objects and departments of human knowledge; that if we could draw the thunder from the clouds, we might eradicate or prevent the birth of passion in man, or if we could soar above the clouds, from the properties of air, we might rise above human weakness from the general study and application of metaphysics; it appeared

peared, in fine, that when ſuch a nation as France had *overturned tyranny*, they muſt neceſſarily, or as a matter of courſe, *eſtabliſh liberty ;*—that this liberty, for any thing we could tell, *might* be as new to the world as the means, or the agents of its accompliſhment ; that, in defiance of all that hitherto paſſed for wiſdom and experience, we *might* now behold a more than golden-age,—a *moral and political millenium.* To the bleſſings of this new diſpenſation, enthuſiaſm could ſcarce permit herſelf to imagine bounds. War was to ceaſe ; the wolf to dwell with the lamb, and the infant to lead the young lion!

At a time when ſentiments like theſe were far from uncommon among us ;—I can almoſt vouch for their exiſtence, for ſome of them are not very unlike what were my own ;—at a time when many of us formed *wiſhes*, yet ſcarce knew *what* we, or what the world, ſhould dare either to wiſh or expect, from the daily miracles that were diſplaying themſelves,—it is not ſurpriſing that ſome among us turned their views upon this our little iſland, one of the prime favourites of nature, and on its gallant people, equal, I will ſay, to any on earth, if nature, capacity, and almoſt a ſuperabundance of life were done juſtice to. Could

any

any man, could any of ourſelves at leaſt, born above brutes, or ranking above the vegetable, ſay, that this country, and this people, were *what they ought to be*,—what they *could remain*,—what it would not be ten thouſand ſhameleſs iniquities to *allow* them to remain, even if our people—but that was impoſſible,—could be *contented* to be ſuch as they were?

No!—this country, this people of ours (and I rejoice in being able to ſay ſo) *could not remain as they were.* Our Catholics had already begun to move.—Apprehenſions, and a caution not diſcreditable, often moſt honourable and moſt neceſſary in political men of a certain degree of oſtenſible reſponſibility, who would ſerve their country, not ſhock opinions,—had, in the ſpring of ninety-one, prevented the humble petitions of theſe depreſſed men from making their way to our legiſlature.—Even old and ſteady friends were afraid to *agitate* the queſtion. The nation, or the high political powers of it, were conceived *unripe.* Certain parties, either having or thought to have their uſe, might be broken, and the Catholics not ſerved, nor the nation united. The Catholics reſolved to renew their applications in the following ſeſſions. The reſolution

reſolution proved them men, and the opinion that they required but *adoption* to become brethren, began thence to gain more ground among the Proteſtants.—Belfaſt had the honour of leading the way.——The new faith underwent juſt ſo much oppoſition as to make it thrive.—— In the autumn of ninety-one they formed the firſt ſociety of United Iriſhmen, ſoon followed by that of Dublin, who, in right of her ſeat, endowments and dignity, aſſumed the politico-pontifical chair.

As I have ſtated the *abuſes* of this laſt ſociety, (the only one of which I recollect any publication, except the original declaration) and as I find myſelf obliged to ſay, that ſuch abuſes almoſt neceſſarily belong to its *too popular foundation*, and to its aſſumption of a political *lead*, with which this ſo popular foundation is radically incompatible, I owe it to juſtice, and to my own conſiſtency, to defend the *firſt principles* on which theſe ſocieties were formed, and which neither their miſapplication nor perverſion, neither the follies nor crimes of thoſe who profeſs them, have yet determined me to retract or be aſhamed of.

The name *United Iriſhmen* expreſſes their grand principle,—*Union among Iriſhmen*. Take from it the cloud thrown over it by the conduct of thoſe who aſſumed it, and I conceive no name in this country higher, none of more patriotic devotion, none more expreſſive of the *ſtate* and *neceſſities* of our country, or more conſiſtent with all that is *due* to that nation with which we are connected through our common ſovereign, or to that ſovereign himſelf, who is the immediate bond of our connection. The principle expreſſes *the great neceſſity* that we ſhould be A NATION, and uſe the only means,—*union in a national ſpirit*,—a national ſpirit in our people, producing a more perfectly national ſpirit in our legiſlature. It expreſſes the neceſſity of obliterating for ever, all ſave the mere hiſtoric and warning memory of the fact, that any part of our people had been a hoſtile colony, a foreign ſettlement, or a trading factory, paying to the country whence they came *ſubjection* for *ſupport*, and cheriſhing againſt their adopted and now natural country, or, which is the ſame, againſt the native inhabitants,—*now their countrymen*,—a ſpirit of unextinguiſhable hoſtility, as an eternal principle of ſelf-defence. It expreſſes the principle, that we ſhould not vainly attempt to

arreſt the efflux of time, nor impiouſly counteract the benevolent progreſs of nature,—that we ſhould allow all wounds to cloſe, nor attempt to give to Enmity the moſt mortal, naturally, as the moſt odious of human beings, a blaſphemous and miſerable immortality. It expreſſes the principle, that we ſhould now, at length, when ſafely we may, become ONE PEOPLE ENJOYING ONE LAW,—from whence muſt flow, as a neceſſary conſequence, *a legiſlature*,—*to every truly and comprehenſively beneficial purpoſe*,—*national*,—a legiſlature ſufficiently connected in ſpirit and intereſt with our people, and with the whole people; devoted, of courſe, to their intereſt, in the moſt enlarged and liberal ſenſe, not to the petty and degrading monopolies of *any part of it*, —colonial or native, proteſtant or catholic, ariſtocratic or popular,—and, as little (I was going to ſay—ſtill-leſs) devoted to any *excluſive* or *prevalent* intereſt of our ally or confederate Britain, —with whom fate has connected us, and from whom we never can be ſeparated, unleſs by ſomething worſe, if not more pitiable than madneſs, either of Britain herſelf, forcing us to believe our intereſt and opinions of intereſt, irreconcileable, or of our own people, thinking an equal confederacy *by law*, and a nearly equal confederacy *in fact*, not ſufficient, and reſolving to purchaſe

chaſe by the horrors and riſks of civil war, the perhaps unhappy independence of *a name*.

The nation was to be *raiſed*,—as a nation ;—the people, *as the people*, were to be raiſed into greater conſideration and conſequence, and, of courſe, power. This could only be through a *popular ſpirit*, directed to what ſeemed the *only poſſible means*,——*union*, to obtain Catholic emancipation and reform. The enthuſiaſm of the times at once afforded the *opportunity*, and pointed out the *neceſſity of uſing it ;* ſhewed at once the good that might be done, and the danger of not attempting it.

While a flame of liberty,—no matter whether well or ill-underſtood,—was embracing the world, were our Iriſh Catholics alone of the human race, to catch no portion or particle of its lambent ſubtlety ? Were they *never* to remember that they alſo were men ? Having joined their Proteſtant brethren in demanding juſtice from Britain (for join us they *did*, and to their ſerious aſſiſtance alone,—if to any thing that *the people* did, we owe our ſucceſs*;) were they ſo dull of nature, or ſo degraded,

* It has been ſaid by ſome of our Proteſtant reformiſts, that we regained the independence of our legiſlature without

 Catholic

degraded, as never to recollect, never to apply to themſelves, as Catholics, the example which we

Catholic aid, and might without it gain a reform. Gentlemen forget the almoſt diſgraceful failures of two Conventions, aiming at a reform *merely* Proteſtant; the only one that then, perhaps, could appear *practicable*. They forget alſo that the Volunteers of our *Olympiad* (may I call it) *of eighty-two* were, in ſome parts of the country, neceſſarily *Catholic*, the Proteſtants who could bear the expence of the aſſociations being there comparatively few. But they forget a fact of chief prominence in our hiſtorical tablet, which few of our active Catholics of the day have themſelves much attended to, I imagine;—that the Catholic body, however ſilent or apparently inactive, were rendered *powerful ſupporters* in the revolution of eighty-two, by their *adoption* (let me name it) at the firſt Dungannon Convention. "The *ſacred right* of private judgment in matters of religion," was there, *for the firſt time*, declared by a body of the Proteſtant *people*, and the relaxation of the penal laws againſt Catholics rejoiced in,—"as a "meaſure *fraught with the happieſt conſequences* to the UNION "and PROSPERITY of the inhabitants of Ireland." Theſe *firſt ſeminal principles of national union and toleration* being thus ſpread, from a ſort of authority, throughout the kingdom, were inſtantly and ſo warmly returned and vivified by declarations from every quarter, that it became evident we, at laſt, *underſtood*, and *were determined to cultivate*, the *only*, and *finally irreſiſtible* means of national emancipation. The hint was equally underſtood among ourſelves and in England. We immediately had "an Iriſh Brigade," conſiſting, profeſſedly, of Catholics as well

as

we all gloried in as Iriſhmen? Were they never to dream of ſaying to us—" We gained *you* " liberty.

as Proteſtants, and our legiſlative independence was wiſely and liberally acknowledged by Great Britain.

Having had the honour of propoſing thoſe declaratory reſolutions at Dungannon, I hope I may be allowed to add a few words explaining the hiſtory of the fact, and ſhewing its connection with our late Catholic revolution. I had ſo drawn the intended propoſition for Dungannon, as that it declared (I think I recollect almoſt the very words, and believe I have the ſketch itſelf ſomewhere by me)—that " We anticipated " in imagination *that glorious, happy, and, we truſted, not* " *diſtant æra*, when, in conſequence of *the gradual operation* " of theſe relaxations of the penal laws, *all our countrymen*, " of whatever religious perſuaſion, would have *an equal in-* " *tereſt* in, and *equally enjoy*, the laws, conſtitution, and li- " berty of their country." But this ſentiment, and the *conſummating views* it opened, were too bold for the infant liberality and unripe comprehenſion of the times; and in conſequence of conſultations and arguments before the meeting, I found myſelf obliged to ſubmit to its amputation;—for ſuch, in its worſt ſenſe, I conſidered the ſurrender. I even thought it *neceſſary*,—in order to carry a meaſure, in which I ſhould have conſidered a failure as the death blow of our emancipation,—to uſe arguments at the meeting addreſſed to thoſe who were likely to be moved only by the moſt *narrow and illiberal policy*. In doing ſo, I ſacrificed more *perſonal character* than I was aware of; for I thought *my own* private ſentiments

" liberty. Our *name*, if not our arms, reſtored
" to *you* a Conſtitution, which, had we been
" ſuppoſed

ſentiments were too well known to many of the Delegates, and had been otherwiſe too well proved, to be miſconceived. However, if I required conſolation, I received it from the information afterwards given me, that, with ſome Delegates, the *only* convincing arguments had been thoſe addreſſed to *policy and illiberality*, and that but for theſe, they would have oppoſed the meaſure.—Such is man, and we muſt take him as we find him!

To give greater force to the meaſure, and a ſtronger *leſſon* to all our ſects and deſcriptions of men, I choſe for ſeconder of the motion my friend Mr. Black, now diſſenting miniſter of Derry (whoſe principles I had long known, and have ſince farther proved;)—a reſolution which obliged me to decline the favour of being ſeconded by Mr. Harvey of the county of Donegall, a gentleman of handſome fortune, and a clergyman of the eſtabliſhed church, who applied to me for leave to ſecond the motion, and was ſo liberal as to be ſatisfied with my reaſon for preferring Mr. Black,—" that I
" wiſhed the motion ſeconded rather by *a Preſbyterian miniſ-*
" *ter*;—that ſect being univerſally believed *moſt hoſtile to the*
" *Catholics*."

Here then appears, not faintly or obſcurely ſhadowed, but clearly and ſtrongly ſketched, the *great outline* and *principles* of Iriſh and Catholic emancipation, of which all that has ſince been written and done is, perhaps, but the illuſtration, finiſhing, or execution.

Among

" ſuppoſed *hoſtile* or *neutral*, you never could " have either regained or deſerved. Shall we " *never*

Among thoſe publications which have moſt ſucceſsfully illuſtrated this plan of national union, by far the firſt, as well as the earlieſt, ſeem to me to be thoſe of my relation Mr. Jones, on whoſe particular merits in reſpect to the Catholics, a ſpirit ſo much reſembling detraction has *lately*, I find, appeared, that it has induced me to reconſider them a little; and, ſomewhat intereſted as I may appear in the queſtion, I cannot help ſaying, that if the decided, and bold, and enthuſiaſtic aſſertion of the ancient merits and honour, and of the preſent rights of Catholics, and of the ſafety, and expediency, and even neceſſity of reſtoring theſe rights,—if the Proteſtants wiſhed for a reform,—if they wiſhed us " confirmed a kingdom, and not a colony,"—if the *able* aſſertion of theſe principles, even at a time when the advocate of the Catholics ſeemed, to ſo many of his Proteſtant countrymen, almoſt a viſionary, be *merit*,—the teſtimonies to Mr. Jones, from the Catholics, ſhould be *the moſt honourable* that they have to beſtow on any man of their country.

Before I conclude this long note, let me, as a farewell to the ſubject, obſerve, that though I am happy to ſee the Catholics obtain liberty *by any means not occaſioning a commotion*, yet I regret that the means found neceſſary to be uſed, reflect but little honour on the legiſlature, and have had conſequences, the danger of which may not yet be entirely removed. I regret that *Parliament* did not take up the buſineſs *in time*. They might *then* have given the Catholics *all civil*

liberty

" *never* partake of, never enjoy that Conſtitution " which we thus reſtored?" If ſuch demands of our Catholics ſhould be neither anticipated nor yielded to,—*what*, if the enthuſiaſm of the times continued,—what *might* or rather *muſt* be, the conſequence?—Either *emigration*, to *find* a

liberty on the inſtant,—and ſuch a portion, and earneſt, and aſſurance of a ſpeedy and full participation of *political power*, as would, *before this day*, have made the country more flouriſhing, at leaſt, and happy,—would have prevented all poſſible danger to its peace or conſtitution, and probably have made its tranſition at this time into *perfect liberty*, a matter as much of courſe and as ſafe, as any of the ordinary bills of the ſeſſion. This was my idea in eighty-four, and every thing that has ſince paſſed, has given me but more reaſon to be confirmed in it.—I do not pretend to ſay, that conceding *the whole* in eighty-four, would have been really dangerous,—far leſs, that doing ſo now would not be the ſoundeſt national policy. I think it would be ſuch. I have already repeatedly declared ſo. I only mean to ſay, that granting *almoſt* the whole at that time,—grantingall, except ſuch a *degree* of *political power* as, it might rationally be feared, would occaſion *a revolution or transfer of power*, or a violent and dangerous conteſt for *ſuperiority*,—would have been clearly ſafe, and therefore the beſt national policy;—and that granting *nothing* from that hour to this,—not even after the revolutions of the times announced the neceſſity, has brought this country into a ſituation from whence it is happy if it be ſoon relieved,—has ſpread ſuſpicions and diſcontent, and given arms to turbulence, if not to treaſon.

country,—

country,—a meaſure which no morality could cenſure,—or the attempt, by *triumph at home*, to *recover* or *make* a country,—the lawfulneſs of which would be proved by the triumph itſelf, or the unlawfulneſs, by the renewal of ſcenes not even to be remembered, and by the practical execution of penalties ſcarce admitting aggravation in their theory. *Could* the war of eighty-two ſo ſoon be forgotten,—how we armed in ſilence, and conquered by words? Was no preparation ever likely to be made for *a moment* that might enable rights to be taken which would not be reſtored? Could we be certain that ſuch a moment was beyond the power of time or chance to bring?—Could any man ſay, that the Catholics (were all other redreſs denied) would not be juſtified, nay called on, with all their power and addreſs, to *prepare* for and *haſten* ſuch a moment? Could any man ſay, that it was right, that it would not be madneſs, to make "*inſurrection*" ſeem "a ſacred duty" in Catholics, and to make it ſeem doubtful, whether *oppoſition* to ſuch inſurgents would in our Proteſtants be a duty or a crime? And if the moment ſhould ever arrive, when, by the ſword or the fear of the ſword, our Catholics could *dictate*,—if the *natural* ſhould ever thus become the *political* power of the country,—who

is the man, what body of men, would anſwer for a wiſe, and peaceable, and moderate, and magnanimous uſe of ſuperiority ſo gained?—Who *then* would anſwer for a chriſtian or god-like forgiveneſs of injuries, real or ſuppoſed?—Who, that there would exiſt no ſpirit of retaliation or revenge, no deſire of indemnifying for paſt loſſes, or of plunder, under the name of indemnity or penalty or ſecurity?—Who then would anſwer for the conſequences to the Conſtitution, or the peace of the country?—Who for the *ſtate*—who for the *church*—who for even the *toleration of proteſtantiſm*,—when the multitude held the ſword, and even leaders might be but the inſtruments of a mob?—Who, at leaſt, would anſwer for that honour and dignity of the legiſlature which ſhould never, if poſſible, be expoſed to ſtain or compromiſe, nor appear to concede to power, not juſtice; which ſhould *grant*—in time, and from good-will, and as entitled to gratitude,—not *ſurrender*—in humiliation, and from fear, and exciting a contempt only leſs deſtructive than continued obſtinacy or injuſtice?—Who would be the wiſe men that would guarantee againſt all theſe dangers; or who the wiſer men that would truſt their forward guarantee?—— There was *but one way*, let us agree, were there

ten

ten thouſand out of which to chuſe,—*there was but one way which could be ſafe.* It was, that the people ſhould unite to *do*, at leaſt, if not to *obtain juſtice*,—to reſtore, improve, and confirm freedom;—that they ſhould unite to *cultivate* a deep and habitual ſenſe of common intereſt, and to demand *the indiſſoluble union of equal laws.* This general ſenſe of common intereſt and general reſolution to promote and procure its eſtabliſhment, could have been cultivated in perhaps but one way;—by ſocieties at once political and ſocial, bringing as it were within the ſphere of ſympathetic attraction, thoſe between whom the laws had placed a great gulph, and binding them together by ſuch great objects as the different aſſociating intereſts muſt, from their peculiar political opinions and neceſſities, have each moſt at heart;—in ſhort, by ſocieties of United Iriſhmen,—a name of ſuch native and eſſential meaning as nothing could have blaſted, except a folly and intemperance aſtoniſhing, if any thing in folly or intemperance could aſtoniſh.

It may be ſaid, that all theſe abuſes of ſuch inſtitutions ſhould have been foreſeen.—That no better could have been expected from ſocieties

that either ſet out, or were ſo likely ſoon to become a mob, and, as ſuch, ſo dangerous poſſibly to the peace of the country, or ſo deſtructive to the very cauſe they would ſerve.—That ſuch ſocieties ſhould either not have been formed, or their errors ſhould have been more guarded againſt. That popular ſocieties, like the people itſelf, are a dangerous inſtrument of good. If heavy and ſluggiſh and inert, they are difficult to move; but once moved, acquire a momentum not at all to be reſiſted, nor ever, at the preciſe moment of propriety, to be ſtopped. If lively and active and paſſionate, the hurricane itſelf is not more deceitful, nor its track and ſweep of deſtruction leſs to be calculated or foreſeen. That where men can be ſecure neither of their aſſociates nor their inſtruments, nor of the uſe to which they themſelves may be put as either aſſociates or inſtruments, they ſhould not act at all, or ſhould uſe ſo much caution, that it muſt be the next thing to inaction.

That theſe objections have but too much foundation, (for I cannot accede to them in their extent, nor think them applicable ſtrictly to all circumſtances and all times) the example of France, and what has happened even here, has ſince

ſince proved. When theſe ſocieties, however, were formed, the French experiment had but little developed itſelf,—had been conſidered at leaſt with little coolneſs; and the pitch of extravagance to which our mother ſociety of Dublin has ſoared, could not eaſily have been foreſeen by thoſe who imputed to its leaders even a moderate ſhare of common ſenſe, or ſuppoſed them poſſeſſed of any political principle not terminating in anarchy.

Theſe ſocieties required, I have obſerved, in ſome of them at leaſt, a very popular baſe, in order to cultivate popular union and a national ſpirit. It was not immediately obſerved, but the event ſeems to have proved that this very popular nature,—which was abſolutely neceſſary perhaps for their firſt, immediate, and *preparatory* purpoſe of *national union*,—diſqualified them in the very ſame degree, for the higher purpoſes which ſeemed to follow of courſe the other, but which require powers of quite a different order,—thoſe of leading in the detail, depths and delicacies, or of pointing out, diſtinctly and particularly, the chief political *objects* of this national union, when accompliſhed, and the *means*, at leaſt the beſt and moſt practicable means, of attaining theſe

objects. Such popular societies,—in order to be *even safe* in attempting any thing above the diffusion of the simplest, and most incontrovertible, and most plainly applicable principles,—should be *qualified* by the infusion of a spirit not strictly popular, but scientific and philosophic,—by the intermixture of not merely a few, but a pretty numerous *body of members* of such political information ability and integrity, as would be equally above seducing or yielding to the ignorance, indiscretion, or violence of *the many*.—Now, such an infusion of science, philosophy, ability and integrity, or at least the *continued predominance* of such a spirit in so very popular a body, must, *if it pretend to lead*, as our United Irishmen do, be next to a miracle. The aristocratic * part, I will call it, and the democratic would probably, before long, be an equal annoyance to each other; and if there happened to exist in the society a few would-be dicta-

* I hope there is no offence in calling that the *aristocratic* part, in which the *wisdom* of a popular society resides.—It certainly answers as well to the etymology of the word; and those who think an aristocracy, in perhaps every sense, a foolish thing, cannot take it ill, that the name is *not* applied to the *majority* of *any democratic body*.

tors

tors or a ſingle one, the duty of the intelligent and honeſt part of the ſociety would ſoon, it is probable, be made as diſagreeable to the individual as uſeleſs to the public. To keep demagogues from miſchief or the multitude from folly, is a ſerious occupation. The cave of Æolus, however occaſionally to be *viſited*, by a Juno from a love of empire or revenge, or by a Ulyſſes from an ardent paſſion for his country, would require more than the *ſceptre* of an Æolus to make it an endurable dwelling, or ſcene of action, to a lover of peace, philoſophy, or the muſes*.

To remedy, in part, theſe palpable deficiencies in the city ſociety, an attempt was made ſome conſiderable time ago to form another ſociety, agreeing in the great principles of Catholic

* ———— Hic vaſto rex Æolus antro
Luctantes ventos, tempeſtateſque ſonoras
Imperio premit, ac vinclis & carcere frenat.
Illi indignantes,—*magno cum murmure montis*,—
Circum clauſtra fremunt. Celſa ſedet Æolus arce,
Sceptra tenens,—*mollitque animos, & temperat iras.*——
Ni faciat, maria ac terras, cælumque profundum
Quippe ferant rapidi ſecum, verrantque per auras.—

ÆNEID.

Emancipation

Emancipation and Reform, but including perſons who might differ in certain *degrees* of thoſe principles, or perhaps as to ſome of the means of carrying them into effect. The name of United Iriſhmen having been even then diſcredited, it was to have been ſacrificed; yet did ſome gentlemen of ability, integrity and moderation, fear the conſequences of entering into a ſociety even thus guarded. The caution of thoſe gentlemen may have been no more than neceſſary.—The general reaſons for ſuch caution have before been touched on. Their motives for it were undoubtedly good;—but, by declining to take any part in this *ſub-political* field, they left it in the full poſſeſſion of the intemperate and incapable, whom the inſtitution of more guarded ſocieties might have checked and kept in order, if it could not reform them.

Nor is this the only inſtance in which it is doubtful whether extreme caution has not proved extreme imprudence. For, near two years ago, in the ſummer receſs of ninety-one, and before there was in the kingdom a ſingle ſociety of United Iriſhmen, I myſelf, as an act of public and private duty, gave a number of the firſt men in the kingdom *notice* of ſome facts with

with which I had been made acquainted, and which it were to be wiſhed they had thought worthy their attention in the laſt ſeſſion of parliament.—The facts to which I claimed the attention of theſe gentlemen were theſe;—that the Catholics having been unſucceſsful in attempts to get a petition preſented to Parliament in the preceding ſeſſion, did intend to renew their application in the following one—" That *I had* " *ſtrong reaſons to believe* that a number of Pro- " teſtants, perſons of ſome weight in the North, " had taken up the idea of declaring in their fa- " vour, and ſhould the Catholics, or the Pro- " teſtants who might ſupport them, require aſ- " ſiſtance, there were, *even to my knowledge*, " men of literary talents in this town, and " through the kingdom, who would devote " themſelves to a principle that reſtored liberty " and union to the people." I went farther; I warned theſe gentlemen againſt the effects of " the late revolutions which ſeemed extending " themſelves, *in preparation at leaſt*, round the " habitable globe;—that whether thence, and " from the theories of government which had " gone forth, the rights of citizens and men " were better underſtood, or only ſuppoſed ſo " to be, this effect *muſt* equally follow,—that *all*

 power,—

" *power,—all power—muſt ſhortly either moderate*
" *itſelf, or be over-turned.* The conſequence of
" this latter circumſtance, who, I aſked, ſhall
" tell? The very *riſking* of it might be a game
" ſuiting deſperate fortunes or deſperate princi-
" ples; but if *the powers that are*, or if *the gen-*
" *tlemen I addreſſed*, engaged voluntarily in ſuch
" deep play, they would do the very thing which
" men ſo deſperate would wiſh them to do. They
" wagered againſt infinite odds. They would
" act more prudently to " *diſcern the times.*"

Here was a new ſort of conſpiracy,—announced and juſtified by, it ſhould ſeem, one of the conſpirators themſelves,—to a number of the very perſons conſpired againſt,—and who were told how they could not only ſecure themſelves againſt the treaſon, but turn it into triumph. If I adviſed the admiſſion of my countrymen, the enemy, within the walls of the Conſtitution, I did not conceal them, it muſt be owned, in a wooden horſe, nor did I affect to have quarrelled with them, or any of their " Inventors of wickedneſs." Perhaps it might be for this reaſon among others, which might ſeem a ſort of *plebeianiſm* of principle, that I had leſs credit with thoſe of the Patrician Order. The fear of being betrayed into any thing

thing like *agitating* prevailed; and the people were left to *God and their right*,—in other words, to *themſelves and their own leaders*. Juſt ſo did *the powers* of France! Juſt ſo was introduced the ready reform of the *lamp-iron*, and the deteſted mercy of the *guillotine*,—the exile and murder of almoſt all the honour and integrity of the country, and the anarchic deſpotiſm of mobs, rendered inevitable, perhaps, by the delay of *juſt conceſſion*, by the delay of *wiſe interpoſition*,—mixed, if it muſt be, with a manly and determined oppoſition,—of men who had the pre-eminent intereſt in the peace and proſperity of their country, and who once, perhaps, might have led that country with a ſilken thread, and awed into impotence, or condemned to their own inſignificance, all the wicked or blindly-devoted miniſters of deſtruction.

If the Patrician and even the Equeſtrian Order left the people to themſelves, theſe, to return the compliment, made a moſt happy uſe of their time and liberty. They naturally enough took our politicians at their word. If none would ſtart as leaders,—why, "they would *have* no leaders." It was quite ſimple.—They had learned that it was equal folly to import a *king* "from

 Normandy,"

Normandy," or to accept a consignment of *leaders*, by land-carriage from College-green.—They were told, some of them,—(I recollect the time,—tis a good while ago ;) that if they would have no *great* leaders, they might happen to get a few *little* ones, and gain but moderately by the change.—It did not signify ;—they would have no leaders. What had the nation to do but *go abreast?*—They all know their business,—and their men. " *Instinct*, says Falstaff, is *a great matter.*" The lion knows " the true Prince,"—and the people *the true Constitution.* They have then no occasion to *think ;*—they have only *to go on.* And if any little mound inclosure or impediment, such as a law, or a principle of political prudence, or of universal justice, or of common-sense, or an array of national property character and integrity (supported peradventure by something more than the national standing army) should meet them on the way—they have only to *go on still,*—only to act first and think afterwards,—to get over the mound if they can, if not, down with it as a nuisance, and dance, or build a Babel on its ruins. When the thing is *done*, they will find out or be told, whether it is *well done* or not ;—and when the confusion of tongues comes,—why, then they will all understand one another.

ther. Happy,—could we but find out the happineſs,—happy ſtate of things, where no man is led, yet all are leaders;—where no man follows, yet ſomebody or other ſtill goes foremoſt;—where no man "truſts friend or enemy," yet ſtill ſome friend or enemy is employed;—where every man judges and acts in every thing,—and every man for himſelf, no man in the leaſt degree for his neighbour, yet ever and anon ſome good-natured and active and diſintereſted citizen or other, "inſtinct" no doubt with the pureſt patriotiſm and with love of every human being but himſelf,—ſupplies *impartially*, from his mighty ſtores of obſervation and reflection,—the facts, the fictions, the inuendos, the principles, and all the good and complicated materials, on which this omniſcient good judge, and omnipotent good brother-citizen judges and acts,—pulls down and builds up, makes and unmakes, creates and regenerates, ſaves and damns, *all that comes before him*,—conſtitutions and characters, kingdoms, empires, republics themſelves, worlds of matter, and worlds of ſpirit!

"Oh but (our gentlemen will ſay) we dont mean, literally, that we are to have *no* leaders, we only mean that we are to have none but from

from among ourſelves;—in ſhort we ſhall be our own leaders!——We know *ourſelves* to be honeſt,—we are ſure we have underſtanding—and the ſubject, beſides, is the ſimpleſt on earth.—Any infant could form a Houſe of Commons! What has he to do but make it *perfectly* pure, *perfectly* unmixed, and *perfectly* unconnected with and uninfluenced by either of the other two branches of the legiſlature,—choſen freely, that it may be a *fair emanation*, and for the ſhorteſt poſſible term, that it may be *ſufficiently under the controul* of the people;—in ſhort, that it may be *their expreſs image*, and breathing *ſolely* their living ſpirit,—and the buſineſs is done.—To do this, or to foreſee its ſafe and ſovereign efficacy as a reform, requires no *deep knowledge of any kind*,—no *ability* almoſt—but ſimply *a little common-ſenſe and common honeſty;*—and they who would perſuade us otherwiſe may have much of the two or three firſt of theſe qualities, but we muſt be excuſed from attributing to them any extraordinary portion of the laſt!"

I ſhall not at preſent ſtop to ſhew, as I think I eaſily could, and as perhaps ſome time hence, ſhould it appear likely to be uſeful, I may attempt to do,—that the ideas which the people generally entertain

entertain of our Conſtitution are, in ſome material reſpects, groſsly falſe and unfounded;—that in particular, the opinions juſt mentioned, and others perhaps which ſeem to be at leaſt inſinuated by ſeveral of our late reſolutions from Dungannon, are ſuch. I ſhall only give a few arguments to prove that, *from the very nature of the ſubject*, the principles and perfection of our Conſtitution, or in ſhort of any form of government, *cannot poſſibly* be ſo ſimple and intelligible to every man of whatever capacity or knowledge;—and I ſhall then mention a few *facts*, which ſeem to prove *experimentally*, that a little more modeſty in the arduous taſk of conducting a great national emancipation and reform would not have been quite unbecoming the gentlemen whoſe arguments I am anſwering, nor perfectly a matter of indifference to the country to which they have preſumed to give law.

A form of government is ſimply an invention,—or an inſtitution, the mixed produce of accident and invention,—to keep in order and direct to the greateſt attainable good, and to ſecure, as far as practicable, from evil, *a multitude* of thoſe complicated and wonderful beings, men,—beings various almoſt to infinity, yet alike almoſt to a miracle;—

miracle;—gifted by nature with all the poſſible degrees and combinations of (we might almoſt venture to ſay) all the poſſible powers, diſpoſitions and qualities of body and mind,—external and internal perception, reaſon, imagination, affections, paſſions, appetites, inſtincts, &c.—and theſe altered and modified, in a thouſand different ways, by the circumſtances in which they are placed, the country, climate, times, accidents at home, accidents from abroad, and the habits which the aſſemblage of all theſe have given birth to, matured, or confirmed.

That a *ſingle* complicated machine (I ſhall call it) of this kind ſhould be underſtood in all its parts by any man living, or even in many of its parts, by one out of a hundred of thoſe who paſs for men themſelves, "becauſe God made them," and they walk upon two, and go through the ordinary functions of life better belike than moſt of our politicians and philoſophers, is juſt about as *probable* as that the mill-horſe ſhould underſtand the whole machinery which, blind or blind-folded, he contributes to move, or that a mite, having traverſed or eat its cheeſe, ſhould deſcribe the proportions and uſes of the univerſe.—If to *order and direct well*, and to *pre-*

pare for ſelf-direction, a *ſingle* human being requires knowledge, powers, perſeverance, and a benevolent integrity far above common,—*who is he* that is fit to lay down, or in many reſpects to judge of, even ſmall *parts* of a plan that is to govern a *multitude* of ſuch beings?—Which of us, not having ſtudied or practiſed any mechanical art or occupation, pretends to work at it?—To conſtruct an Orrery,—to proportion the powers and regulate the movements of a watch?—To explore the depths of chemiſtry, or to apply this chemiſtry to medicine, to agriculture, or to our manufactures, &c.?—Which of us pretends to ſurgery without having attended diſſections, or cures the diſeaſes of the body without knowing what the body is? Is the mechaniſm, the ſcience of *mind*, or of *man*, an object of leſs ſtudy or difficulty, than the properties of inanimate matter, or the ſeparate parts of the animal body?—Should we not know the *materials* of this delicate machine, *a people*, their forms, magnitude and capacities, before we attempt to put them together, or to judge of them when put together?—If the machine appear out of order, ſhould we not be acquainted with its *true theory*, with the *uſe* and *connection* of all its parts, before we pretend to find out the ſeat, the cauſe, or the cure of the

diſorder?—What ſhould we ſay of the unhappy clown, who after gaping about a while in a mill or a ſteam-engine, ſhould take offence at the dirty oil that leſſened the friction in one part, the flow of water which prevented its taking fire in another, or, ſeiſed with a ſpirit of practical criticiſm, ſhould creep into a corner of the machinery, and pulling away ſome *check*, *ſtay*, or *regulator*,—uſeleſs in his mind, or a clog on the work, —ſhould ſet all in a thundering commotion about his ears?—His amazements and miſchances in the experiment, if not too ſerious, might furniſh ſome not uninſtructive buffoonery for a pantomine.—How he might be buffeted by this arm or that of the machine,—be ſtarted from a ſpring-board and meet a ſplinter, be caught up and tattered by this flyer, and landed a *ſans-culotte* into that hopper, —be borne round or aloft on this or that wheel, and eſcape, by miracle, at length, ſouſed into a boiler or ſhot through a window into the water-courſe!——This might be ſport, if a few candle-ſnuffers were ready to catch our hero in a good blanket. Not ſo perhaps the raſh tampering with *a conſtitution*. The removal of a part, to vulgar apprehenſion inſignificant or injurious, may have ſuch conſequences to the whole machine, that he who brings not to the taſk of reform ſomething

of

of diffidence if not awe on his mind, is either little to be truſted or utterly unfit for the taſk.—He has not knowledge enough to know his own ignorance, or he has not integrity enough to be cautious of doing miſchief.—When therefore we hear of gentlemen who will not venture to be their own mill-wrights or watch-makers, their own ſurgeons or phyſicians, attornies or lawyers,—aſſert that nothing is ſo eaſy and proper as that they, and all other good folk, ſhould be their own and the nations *legiſlators* or *conſtitution-formers*,—ſhould undertake an office that requires more deep knowledge, more ſublime ability and genius than perhaps all the arts and all the ſciences taken together,—we are tempted either to ſmile at their ſimplicity and inconſiſtency, or to think they value the Conſtitution, in their hearts, much leſs than they do a very little of their health, trade, or property. They will knowingly truſt no quack with any of the latter—but they would themſelves bleed and phyſic, carve and tooth-draw the Conſtitution, with as much ſimplicity, or as little remorſe, as a Doctor Laſt, a Sangrado, or his footman Gil Blas.

If there be no ſubject then in which the people can act without leaders,—if the ſubject of

reform be that which, of all others, the people at large are leaſt capable of underſtanding thoroughly, even through their leaders,—the great queſtion is,—*who* are the leaders in whom they ſhould confide?

The choice depends on *the ſpecies of reform aimed at.* The people will judge of the leaders moſt likely to anſwer their own purpoſes, and we ſhall judge of their *purpoſes* by the *leaders* they finally chuſe. If they will continue to be their own leaders, or will chuſe, and confide in as ſuch, none but men of their own order, in either rank or ſpirit,—men ambitious to lead, or condeſcending to flatter them,——(and ſuch men poſſeſs commonly little principle, if they have capacity, and little capacity, if they have principle)——we muſt conclude,—either that they know not what they do, or know too well what they are doing;—that they either have no rational conception what would be reform,—in which caſe the true and well-judging friends of reform will doubt whether they ſhould *join* or *oppoſe* them,—or that they aim not at reform but a revolution,—in which caſe heſitation muſt ceaſe,—all who wiſh to preſerve peace and the conſtitution muſt oppoſe them as

they

they would do an avowed enemy or an invader*.

If

* Of the uſe likely to be made of a popular, or what would be ſtyled a true and radical reform, a thouſand paſſages, in chiefly the Northern news-papers, ſufficiently ſhew.

The anonymous writer of "*Thoughts on the Britiſh Conſtitution*," publiſhed lately in the Belfaſt News-letter, with it ſhould ſeem a real intention of bringing the people *back* to the Conſtitution,—after mentioning that our Biſhops having ſeats among the Lords "*certainly* ſerves neither civil nor religious liberty,"—obſerves, that "though ſome improvement may be made on this point, he conceives that as ſpiritual barons, the Biſhops *would not weigh* A GRAIN *in the ſcale* againſt a Houſe of Commons *really returned by and cloathed with* ALL THE MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE."—I am not one of thoſe accuſtomed to "deem with *myſterious* reverence" of my Lords the Biſhops; nor yet do I look on them as ſo many Antichriſts, or miniſters of Belial or of the lady of Babylon; but obſerving *the ſpirit of the times*, and the lengths to which the following up of theories may carry people, and how *poſſible* it is that "the majeſty of the people," once upon its legs and in motion, might *carry away* all theories and authors of theories,—and after having made the ſcale of the biſhops kick the beam, might lighten his other majeſty (the king) and the temporal barons too, and I dont know whom elſe, of all the incumbrance of legiſlative and political power,—I for myſelf only, and thoſe other humble politicians

who

If we leave the diſcuſſion of principles and their argumentative conſequences, and appeal to

who cannot ſee every thing at the firſt glance, muſt beg a little time to think, and to improve my acquaintance with "*the king-people*," before I conſent to aſſiſt at their coronation, either as a prieſt of the holy popular oil, or as *grand carver* of the Conſtitution, or in any other capacity, even as a news or a link-boy. As a ſpecimen of the condeſcenſion, modeſty, benevolence, and dignity with which the king-people would addreſs their loving and no doubt loyal ſubjects of all deſcriptions, take a proclamation from *the Maghera Volunteers*,—or "NATIONAL GUARDS," who, "*Eighty-four on parade*, December 21ſt, 1792, *announce* to THE WORLD their political principles—in order to *confound envy*, ſilence the babblings of jealouſy, *illumine ignorance*, and *inſpire* PUBLIC CONFIDENCE." They proceed, with all the ability which the preamble promiſes, to "declare *explicitly*, before God and *their fellow-men*," ſeveral laudable feelings and propenſities of theirs, among which is not forgotten their *reverence to themſelves*,—then their pride in "a *limited monarchy*,—viz. the King, by juſt prerogative, *firſt magiſtrate of the executive department*,—an hereditary peerage ONLY—(they will have nothing to do with the Biſhops) and a COMMONS-HOUSE—FEELING ITS SOVEREIGNTY, *as the delegated body of* THE PEOPLE, *ſpeaking the voice and* THUNDERING THE MANDATES *of* THE NATION." They next "execrate the wild and indefenſible levelling idea of—equality in *property*, but glory in *that dear equality* by which intrinſic worth and ſterling merit ALONE exalt their genuine votaries to

"the

to *facts*, or *experiments*,—under which ſort of leaders has our country of late gained moſt,—or, has it been moſt ſucceſsful in the ſyſtem of *leaders*, or of *no leaders*; we ſhall, I think, eaſily determine the queſtion.

" the firſt offices of public confidence intereſt and honour " in the nation." They then *declare* the MOMENT when public reſiſtance is public virtue,—a moment which their deſcription and ſentiments, compared together, announce pretty ſignificantly as *already arrived*;—they declare for " an " *excluſive power* of the people in the Commons-houſe,"—denounce as " a vehicle of temporizing policy" a news-paper which, it ſeems, publiſhes at times ſome different opinions, &c. on *theſe clear principles* of reform;—" denounce *all* " penſioned hirelings, &c.—and declare they will not be " deterred from their duty, UNTIL their country ſhall *taſte* " the ſweets of FREEDOM, *and pluck the fruit luxuriant from* " THE TREE OF LIBERTY." They declare " they will aſſiſt " the legal magiſtrate in the DUE execution of the *good* laws " of the land, againſt every violater of order and JUST go- " vernment,"—with ſome other things, to be publiſhed in a paper *not* denounced. Theſe *Maghera-men*, it appears, are for A LIMITED KING *at the head of* A SOVEREIGN DEMOCRACY,—juſt as their *fellow-men*, our United Iriſhmen, would die for *the Conſtitution*, and be cut to pieces for " *natural right* WITHOUT COMPROMISE."—*Et tu vitula dignus & hic!*—Such is the emulation, and ſo equal is the merit, of all our choice ſpirits in town or village.—Every Colin-clout is an Apollo, and every Apollo a Colin-clout.—*Mens omnibus una!*

Under *parliamentary leaders* it gained (I will even ſay, without riſk of commotion) the Octennial Bill,—the cradle of our reſtored Conſtitution and People ;—the firſt relaxation of the popery laws, the origin and ground-work of thoſe which have ſucceeded ;—the emancipation of our legiſlature from three extrinſic powers, a foreign parliament, two privy councils, and the Engliſh attorney general ;—the reſtoration of the final judicature,—in other words, of legiſlative and political manhood to our lords, and of private juſtice in the laſt reſort, to the middle and lower orders of the community ;—the ordinary great judges of the land, the firſt depoſitaries and diſtributers of juſtice and protection, rendered independent of the crown ;—the liberty of the ſubject protected by the adoption of the Britiſh *Habeas-corpus* act ;—laws to create agriculture and manufactures, to open, I was going to ſay to *expand* the interior of the country by canals, to give the people at large their *only* means of happineſs, *productive and protected induſtry ;*—laws theſe (with many others perhaps on the ſame ſcale that I overlook at the moment) which have made it even neceſſary to the conſequence of our gentry that they ſhould live and ſpend their fortunes at home,—and the effects of

which

which,—(notwithſtanding all that muſt be confeſſed wanting to make the ſyſtem *perfect*,) are ſeen in the face of the country, ſo improved and enriched of late, as to afford but ſlender proof of either an enſlaved people or degenerating Conſtitution;—and laſtly, a degree of *perſonal liberty*, known only to thoſe countries that enjoy the ſame or a ſimilar Conſtitution, and which might be called *perfect licentiouſneſs*, if we looked only to what has been ſo long borne by our legiſlature and government from men whoſe preſent enjoyment even of their lives*, I was going to

* It is not meant to be inſinuated here, that any of the perſons alluded to have forfeited their lives *by the laws of this country*; but merely, that it is an extraordinary proof of the *mildneſs* as well as *powerful protection* of our laws, that many of theſe gentlemen are either *alive* or *at large*. There is not a ſingle public, or perhaps private aſſertion, of certain opinions concerning the *ſlavery* of this country, which is not confuted by the aſſertion itſelf. The aſſertors, bold as they no doubt are, would no more *dare* to make them in an enſlaved country,—in a country of *baſtiles*, *fortreſſes*, *lieutenants of police*, *alguazils*, *janiſſaries*, *bow-ſtrings*, *inquiſitions*, *informers*, *lion's mouths*, &c. &c. than they would to take a lion himſelf by the beard. They are not quite ſo mad neither. The ignorance of many of them of the ſtate of liberty in moſt other countries, and their familiarity with their own *almoſt total freedom from reſtraint*, make them as inſenſible of their liber-

to ſay, is a proof that our Conſtitution has in it ſuch native inherent ſtability vigour and excellence, that it is *enabled* to be what a bad government never can be,—forbearing, merciful and magnanimous.

Such things, if I miſtake not,—and if I do, let me be corrected,—we have gained through leaders, and parliamentary leaders. Such things were, the other day, enjoyed, in this land of ſlaves. If it be a land of ſlaves, it is happy perhaps that we have never yet enjoyed a land of freedom. I fear it would be too much a paradiſe, and that it would be more than all our preachers, religious as well as political, could then do, to bring us to believe and act as if there was ſtill a better world.

But what have we gained by our no-leaders? This:—*that it is at this moment perhaps uncertain*,

ty, as they are of the motion of their blood.——Mr. Simon Brown, in his dedication to Queen Caroline of perhaps the beſt anſwer to Tindal on Chriſtianity, aſſured her majeſty, in melancholy ſerioufneſs, that God had deprived him of his *thinking ſoul*. Theſe gentlemen go about all the market-places telling people they are deprived of *the uſe of their tongues*, and prove they are *fettered* and *hand-cuffed*, by knocking down every man who denies it. They ſeem as mad as poor Mr. Brown,—but, alas, without his knowledge or ability!

whether

whether all we have gained and all we have been lately gaining, by incorporating ourſelves as a people, —IS NOT LOST.

We have *gained* ſuch a ſpirit of diſcontent through the country, and in many parts ſuch a ſpirit of diſobedience to the law, of idleneſs, rapine and diſorder, that nothing but a general reformation of ſentiment, or the rigour of legal and military execution, can quell them. We have gained ſuch an idea of French liberty and equality,—or popular improvements, ſay, upon theſe—diſperſed among our people, that, it ſhould ſeem, multitudes of them want but a watchword, or a little more encouragement and power,—no matter from what quarter,—to change their old mode of living by induſtry, and by the employment derived from the great, the rich, the commercial, and the manufacturing, into the newer and ſhorter mode of living more in leſs time, though by it the ſources of after life ſhould be exhauſted—living on the rich and great while the plunder ſhould laſt, and committing every exceſs that can appear neceſſary to procure maintain or juſtify the privilege. —We have gained the deſtruction of credit in every line, no man knowing what the next mo-

ment may produce, and every man therefore providing in ſome ſort againſt the worſt*. We have gained of courſe, an almoſt total ſtagnation of trade, manufactures, public works, and private induſtry, and a dearneſs of the neceſſaries of life in the capital, the conſequence of unuſual difficulty and danger in tranſporting them from the country, or of a ſcarcity, the natural effect of popular diſſipation and idleneſs. We have gained the deſtruction of our Volunteer Inſtitution, late the pride of the country.—We have gained an encreaſed military eſtabliſhment, and the expence, without perhaps the benefit of a militia.—We have gained the gun-powder and treaſonable correſpondence bill,—confeſſed unfit, either of them, for ordinary times, but which in theſe times, I fear, no man, a friend to the people themſelves, could have oppoſed.—We have gained, in at leaſt ſome parts of the kingdom, a ſort of military government,—neceſſary, I do be-

* Though the deſtruction of credit, and ſtagnation of trade are not owing *entirely* to the general idea of inſecurity in this country, from the ſtate of the popular mind, yet that they are *very much*, or in the *degree* at leaſt in which they ſubſiſt, owing to it, I do believe. The failure of credit began here long before it did in England. Yet I have heard theſe things all accounted for from the *French war!*

lieve, to maintain the peace of the country, but betraying a lamentable fact, that such a government is necessary.—These things have we gained—by leaders of the order of our Dublin United Irishmen and their faithful not humble followers; by men who profess to see in our Constitution, scarce a perfection but one, that, in their opinion, it *legalizes* its own destruction by insurrection;—men who tell the nation—yes—they do tell us,—from the Delphic Temple of their Townhouse, themselves all foaming with consciousness of the inspiring God,—that the time for this insurrection is *already come*,—UNLESS government should capitulate at discretion;——that "after "all they (the men of Belfast) have heard, and "read, (and thought, no doubt) about our *glo-"rious* and *happy* Constitution, they (even they) "are *so ignorant* as not to be able to find *what* "*it is*;—that they do not hesitate to say—(in large characters) WE ARE A NATION OF SLAVES!" —men who will say no more for even our theoretical Constitution, according to their own false yet most popular description of its theory,—"a "government by King, Lords and Commons,—"the Commons being a REAL representation of "ALL the people,"—than that it is "a govern-"ment, which, IF ATTAINABLE WITHOUT VIO-

"LENCE

" LENCE, they *wiſh for* and *prefer*;" but, *if* OBLIGED *to uſe violence*,—which they pretty plainly ſay they *will* uſe, if " *pertinaciouſly oppoſed*," —why then—it ſeems as clear as their own good underſtanding and never-failing common-ſenſe,—that they will *neither prefer nor be content with* this Conſtitution of ours, " glorious and happy" as our dotards and dunces may eſteem it*;—men, the

* On an amendment moved by Mr. Holmes to *expunge* the ſentiment above-mentioned from the addreſs of Belfaſt Town-meeting,—that they preferred *a certain reform* of our Conſtitution, " *if attainable without violence*, &c." a gentleman, whoſe opinion there ſhould be expected to go for ſomething, is repreſented in their news-papers as having profeſſed *for himſelf* opinions directly and unqualifiedly republican, and to have beſides obſerved, that " as *no ſecurity* could be given " that a reform would *not* be denied, *it was but* FAIR *to ſpeak* " *out their minds at once.* They ſpoke but hypothetically, " and only ſaid they ſhould prefer a government by King, " Lords and Commons, were that Commons to be the *true* " and *real* repreſentatives of the people, *rather* than have re- " courſe to violence, *though they might eſteem another form of* " *government more perfect.*" The meeting rejected the propoſed amendment after hearing ſuch language as this, which ſhould ſeem an additional reaſon for adopting it. Yet the moſt forward of theſe Belfaſt patriots are now, it is ſaid, the moſt ſhocked by the imputation of republicaniſm, and the moſt exaſperated againſt government for ſending them an army, and the moſt out of humour with the Conſtitution which

the collected ſpirit, the general and almoſt unvaried words indeed, of whoſe *denunciations* againſt government are no leſs than theſe, " drive not us the peo- " ple *to extremities* :"—a reform we will have :— " to attain it WE SHALL THINK NO SACRIFICE

which puts it in the *power* of government to treat them ſo ; —" with many holyday and lady terms !"

I know there are many reſpectable inhabitants of that town who have not been infected by the *mania* of the moment ; but theſe appear, at leaſt, by far the fewer number, and, probably from deſpair of oppoſing to any purpoſe, left the field of politics, and the character of the town, to the more active but, as uſual, noiſy and preſumptuous order.—Thoſe who know the former will do them juſtice ; but *the town* can only be known by its public acts. The *exceptionable part* of theſe I had wiſhed, it appears, to paſs without particular notice, even though ſome of them had *in form* returned thanks to our United Iriſhmen for their manifeſto. But ſome of theſe gentlemen are too proud of their late political diſcoveries and works of faith and edification, and too confident of the benefit the world and their country muſt derive from the more general diſſemination of them, to let them die the death of a news-paper. A *compleat collection* of them, it ſeems, is ſhortly to appear.—I had thought parts of them, even for their ſakes, better forgotten.—It ſeems I was miſtaken.— But if theſe gentlemen continue ſo ſtedfaſt in *every article* of their creed, and *ſo zealous in making converts*, the more neceſſary is it for thoſe who think it not the true *ſaving* faith, to guard both againſt the doctrines and the preachers.

" TOO

" TOO MUCH, NO RISK TOO GREAT; and NO re-
" form can ever be adequate, or useful, satisfac-
" tory or just, unless ALL IRISHMEN OF EVERY
" DESCRIPTION, shall be EQUALLY and FAIRLY
" represented§,"—give us a reform, OR—" *You*
" will be alone answerable to God and your
" country for *the consequences**,—you alone for
" *all the crimes and calamities* that may follow†,"
—give us a reform—" SAVE your country *in mer-*
" *cy to* YOURSELVES‡!" Such things have we gain-
ed by leaders of that order, who classically address-
ing the Volunteers ‖ their " *Fellow-soldiers*,"—

§ Proceedings of Belfast Town-meeting, December 26th, 1792.

* Address of first Belfast Volunteer Company to the Volunteers of Ireland, December 18th, 1792.—See also an address of the Belfast Volunteer Company, December 17th, of the same sort—" If bad advisers or weak and wicked
" men *force* the people into *extremities*,—on THEM let all the
" miseries fall of civil convulsion."

† Declaration and Principles of the Friends of Parliamentary Reform in Belfast, January 10th, to the 19th, 1793.

‡ Dublin United Irishmen,—Citizen-soldiers, to arms.

‖ First Belfast Volunteer Company, to the Volunteers of Ireland, December 18th, 1792.

Citizens

Citizens now no more,—in another dread ſummons to arms, prefix in capitals,—" YOUR COUNTRY IS IN DANGER!" intending no doubt,—for they muſt have either " heard or read" that the words had a meaning to call on the people to appoint *a dictator*, or to become, every man of them, thenceforward a dictator,—to tell them that ALL LAW MUST CEASE,—*if they would* SAVE *the* REPUBLIC.

Such things have we gained by leaders who threatened the public enemy in their gazettes, with all their preparations for deadly war,—the drummers and trumpeters they *wanted*,—their rounds of ball-cartridge prepared and preparing *per man*,—their ſtores for cannon, as well as ſmall arms,—their grape-ſhot and their caniſter-ſhot;—and called on *France* ſtill, and *French examples*, through all their manifeſtoes.—And when government *does*, at laſt, come down upon them, with an *intolerable law*, to prevent their ſo uſing ſuch deſperate artillery, and with an equally intolerable *ſoldiery*, to keep at their looms and in the counting-houſes, or rather to keep *out* of the ſenate-houſe and out of temptation, theſe illuminated Citizen-ſoldiers,—then, leſt either their former or preſent wiſhes ſhould appear *ambiguous*,

and becauſe the wide world, if they were reſolved on inſurrection, afforded no *remaining* reſources, —and to prove themſelves equally wiſe politic and well-affected, and as capable of conducting, as willing, when neceſſary, to enter into any little ſort of civil war,—they *hide* and *bury* their artillery and ammunition,—and having done ſo, ſet up a moſt piteous lamentation, or rant in all the dignity of ſtage-heroes,—at the abominable injuſtice done to them, and to their principles, in *ſuſpecting* them!

I have now, gentlemen, with a freedom required equally, I thought, by my own character, propriety, and the peculiar circumſtances of the times, laid before you and our countrymen, ſuch details and obſervations reſpecting a popular convention, and a ſet of agitators, the original authors and contrivers of the meaſure, as may tend to explain the true ſpirit and principles of many of our people, in at leaſt one moſt important part of the country, and of the men who ſeem very much to lead theſe people, and, if they can, will lead and govern the whole country.

If I am not much deceived, the ſubjects treated of require the ſerious conſideration of every

perſon not intereſted in our reform only, in itſelf a momentous ſubject, but in the exiſtence of this nation as a free nation, or of the empire perhaps as powerful and proſperous. They furniſh a body of evidence, in my mind not weak, that there *does exiſt* in this country a party, not contemptible for numbers or induſtry, though in appearance not very reſpectable for ability and prudence —(unleſs the power of perverting popular enthuſiaſm into frenzy be ability, or betraying that frenzy into groſs indiſcretion be prudence)—who, under the name of reform, aim at what would be, in fact, a popular revolution,—the eſtabliſhment of a real democracy,—the commencement, or completion of which muſt be a dangerous, ſhall I merely ſay,—a *deſperate civil war*; embittered and envenoned by a thouſand cauſes of diſunion and diſtraction to which France was not ſubject,—yet France has not to boaſt of a war of philoſophy, forbearance and humanity.

" But had you heard *him deliver it*," ſaid Eſchines, of an oration of Demoſthenes againſt himſelf,—" what *then*, my friends, would you have " ſaid of it?"——For my part, I cannot help wiſhing that many more capable than I of political reſearch, and of penetrating the receſſes of the

human mind, by obſerving not the words merely, but geſtures, countenance, tone of voice, the whole manner, the whole man,—had lately *ſeen and heard* Dungannon. It would then be more clear whether or not I do it juſtice; whether I look on the whole buſineſs with any eye of, what ſurely ought not be expected from me, jaundiced ariſtocracy, or whether I am infected by what I ſhould almoſt as little have ſuſpected in myſelf, a puling or affected ſpirit of ſickly ſentimental philoſophy. I think I felt not beneath the common ſtandard of patriotic mind when the firſt Dungannon declared IRELAND SHOULD BE FREE. This was a ſubject we could all underſtand, and might all be permitted, to I know not what madneſs almoſt, to feel. I think too, Proteſtant as I am, if I know what Proteſtantiſm means,—that, had I been preſent in our late Catholic Convention, when they deliberated concerning *their* freedom,—had at any moment an impulſe, unneceſſary indeed but from ſome accident irreſiſtible, ſeized the whole aſſembly,—had they riſen as one man, and ſwords half unſheathed, cried with one voice, "WE WILL BE FREE,"—I think that here too, if a tear had ſtarted in my eye, it would not have been from the feelings of a ſlave or a coward.—This alſo was a ſubject that all men could

could underſtand, nor would Catholics be men if they could have weighed it forever, and its maddening impulſe, in the ſcales of ſlow reaſon or cold-hearted prudence.

But was our late Dungannon ſubject, *reform*, of that nature?—Is it ſo ſimple, ſo clear, ſo ſpecific, ſo much *one*, defined, indiviſible, *uncompromiſable object*, purely and wholly good, without mixture of evil in any part of it,—good in itſelf, good in every tendency, and every conſequence,—impreſſively obvious to every man's ſenſes,—to be comprehended by every man's underſtanding,—to be embraced by every man's heart, who would not on his own forehead brand coward, caitiff, ſlave?—Who can affirm that it is all this?—And if no man can,—what aſpect, to a thinking mind, muſt any thing like *precipitation of judgment*, any thing like *violence* or *intolerance* on the ſubject have? Muſt it always appear patriotic ſpirit, or political mind, or political determination, or ſoundneſs of underſtanding, or ſoundneſs even of heart? Or might it not *ſometimes* wear the appearance of untaught rudeneſs, or ſyſtem-excited upſtart-ſwaggering pride, or fancied fullneſs of comprehenſion, or zeal that could moſt eaſily ſwell and darken into ferocity,

and

and whoſe judgments would be "*judgments of zeal* indeed,—ſeldom, alas, in any age or country, judgments of *juſtice?*—I could wiſh, therefore, that thoſe who may look only on the *written reſolutions* of our Convention, and may think ſome of them good, ſome tolerable, ſome perhaps "indifferent honeſt," ſome meaning little, and ſome poſſibly as well let alone, *had ſeen*, as I did, that they might for themſelves judge of, the ſpirit that reigned;—had ſeen it in all its different yet ſometimes, I thought, united forms of popular plainneſs and demagogue ſubtlety;—ſeen it, one might even fear, in *expreſſions* for the eye and ear, and *meanings* for the paſſions and underſtanding;—ſeen it in the groſs and diſguſting, I was going to add ſcandalous denial of the *exiſtence* of certain principles in the country, which every man who had glanced over a newspaper, or read a ſingle manifeſto of our hot reformers, or liſtened to a ſingle converſation, public almoſt or private, for now years I may ſay, *knew* to exiſt,—unleſs what ſimple men would call *republicaniſm* or *Paine-iſm*, he ſhould be pleaſed to call *legal liberty* and *the conſtitution;*—ſeen it not only in the acts done, and words uſed, but in that ſomething inexpreſſible of *manner*, the index of the ſoul, which no words

can

can perfectly communicate or transfuse. And, that the ear too might bear its teſtimony, I could wiſh our obſerver had *heard*, not that unſeemly ſound of diſapprobation which iſſued once from the gallery, when the recent murder of Lewis was mentioned with a moment's ſentiment and energy*—(for that was but the expreſſion of ſome ſingle perhaps unhappy individual, too wiſe to feel, or having his feeling all abſorbed in a magnificent ſyſtem of underſtanding)—but thoſe well-applied, well-toned *hear 'ems* which reſounded from among ourſelves occaſionally,——the expreſſions at once of *thought* and *refinement*, and of all thoſe *degrees* of each, which mark ſo ſtrongly the preſent man, and ſeem to indicate what a ſmall change of circumſtances, a ſudden acceſſion of unlooked for dignity, " the cloathing of a little brief authority" *might* make of ſome of us modeſt men *in future!*—May Heaven remove far from the beſt among us all ſuch trials!—Let us keep and cling to our ſtations, humble though many of them are,—and not, by aiming at the deſtruction of *artificial and political inequalities*, thoſe of ranks and orders,—hereditary legiſlators and political corporations,—the

* By Mr. Knox of Derry.

cauſes,

cauſes, it muſt be confeſſed, of ſome evil, but the ſources alſo of far out-weighing, and amply compenſating good,—introduce and give *deſpotic ſway* to the infinitely greater *inequalities of nature*,—talents, abilities, knowledge, courage, cunning,——inequalities which, in a popular government, bear more intolerably a thouſand times on *all beneath them*,—on mediocrity, on of courſe all below mediocrity,—on *the great multitude of the people*, including too often the truly great and truly good, who are ſeldom able, and if able would ſeldom condeſcend to meet at every winding and every turn, the artful and the unprincipled, ever-waking avarice, dream-haunted ambition, and the perſeveringly reſtleſs herd of agitators, who ever hate that merit which deſpiſes, thwarts, and awes them, and who govern the vulgar becauſe they are vulgar themſelves, or will be *any thing* in order to ſucceed in governing;—inequalities producing ſcenes of villainy, barbarity, conteſt, convulſion, national miſery, and in the end ſlavery, or entire national deſtruction, which when we review in hiſtory, with all its ſplendid ſingle paſſages and ſingle prodigies of men, we bleſs our more level and humbler perhaps, but infinitely ſafer, infinitely more civilized, and to the

multitude

(perhaps even to thoſe comets of humanity that at times illuminate our ſyſtem) infinitely happier life, and pray that we may have no *heroes*, nor any *miſerable occaſion for heroes*, but live the life, and walk in the ways of *men*.

If the ſpirit of the late Dungannon Convention, or of thoſe deep-thinkers who gave it a ſickly exiſtence, could reaſonably be ſuppoſed *extinct* with the fame of the Convention itſelf, or with any thing that deſerves the name of political characters in its fathers of Dublin and its godfathers and goſſips of the North, I ſhould be ſorry to contribute, if it belonged to me ſo to ſpeak, to making either of them the object of farther attention to the public. If I could confer on them an immortality of any kind, it ſhould, for the honour of my country, be that of oblivion. But believing the ſpirit I have attributed to the Convention to be that *popular*, in other words *revolutionary* ſpirit which I have deſcribed;—believing it alſo to be the ſpirit of thouſands in the Northern province, of I know not how many in other parts of the kingdom, of not a few indeed in this very city, the centre and ſource of every

ſpecies of illumination;—believing that great numbers of the loweſt order of the people have outſtripped ſome of their teachers themſelves in the "dear" doctrine of equality;—convinced alſo that this ſpirit has rather acquired than loſt malignancy from ſomething of chaſtiſement which it has lately received from government and the legiſlature, and that the *mode* of war only is to be changed from the open, bullying, and mad, to the more dangerous perhaps becauſe more covert ſpecies, that would ſap what it could not ſtorm, deceive thoſe it could not debauch, and convert every *puniſhment* of their own crimes, and every *defenſive precaution* againſt their own declared hoſtility, into ſo many articles of national impeachment againſt adminiſtration for defending the Conſtitution, and againſt the Conſtitution which *permits* adminiſtration to defend it;—firmly convinced of the truth of all theſe opinions, and that until this dark and reſtleſs ſpirit is, by ſome means or other, *laid*, the country can know neither proſperity nor peace, neither comfort nor ſecurity, I think it neceſſary thus to trace and purſue its underworkings, and to expoſe them, as far as my ability goes, to the light of day.

Whether

Whether it be that when a ſyſtem of any kind is once embraced, every argument and fact againſt it is ſo turned and contorted as to become an imagined proof in its favour, I know not; but when I have heard that the Dungannon Meeting was now forgotten, I have ſaid to myſelf,—ſo much the worſe! Its *ſpirit* ſhould be known, and yet a little longer remembered. When I have heard that the United Iriſhmen were forgotten—I have thought, ſo much the worſe too, if the fact were ſo; unleſs their principles were forgotten with them.—But I have thought that they were too reſtleſs, ſome of them, or too bigotted to their abſurdities, to allow either the one or the other to be forgotten.—I have heard alſo "that go-"vernment was now become too ſtrong, and "ſhould not be further ſtrengthened, the peo-"ple too weak, and ſhould now, if poſſible, be "raiſed."—The propriety or impropriety of this obſervation depends on the ſenſe of the word, *people*. In that ſenſe, in which it is often uſed, I do for my part confeſs, that I ſhould a thouſand times rather ſee government ſtrong, much ſtronger than even now it is, or is ever likely to be, than ſee the people *in force*. The ſtrength of the people, whether they aim at what the majority of them would call a *real* or *radical reform*, or at a revo-

 lution,

lution, in the eſtabliſhment of a democracy, would be not ſimply the deſtruction of the Conſtitution, but the at leaſt temporary deſtruction, and I believe perpetual diminution of *popular happineſs*. But, in the true and proper ſenſe of the words "*ſtrength of the people*,"—the ſtrength of the *people's rights*,—thoſe rights *truly conſtitutional*, that will contribute to their *true liberty*, or to the object and conſummation of all liberty, —*their true happineſs*,—I too wiſh what is commonly called government leſs ſtrong, and the people more ſo; and I think, beſides, that the *true* and *only* way to make the people *thus* ſtrong, and either to ſecure them the legal and conſtitutional rights they have, or to gain them others, is to teach them *how very dupes they have been*,—*wherein they have been ſuch*,—and *how they may be wiſe hereafter*. The people muſt reconſider many of their opinions or principles in reſpect to the Conſtitution and a reform,—they muſt ſee the political falſehood, inapplicability, and danger of many of theſe principles,—they muſt *un-king* and *un-lord* many of their little leaders, and take up again with their old king and old lords and older and better leaders,—they muſt, in ſhort, ſee the errors of many of their ways, and retrace many of their ſteps, before they can expect to

be

be *at leaſt conſtitutionally*, ſtrong, before they can expect to be *aſſiſted*, before, I will go ſo far as to ſay, they can expect not to be directly and boldly *oppoſed*,—by many of the trueſt and ableſt friends of reform, and of the people themſelves, that this country now contains, or ever perhaps did contain.

If they do not act ſo,—if they do not at leaſt take ſome ſteps very different from what they have lately done, to evince a conſtitutional and peaceable, I will ſay *rational* ſpirit, they will oblige thouſands of the warmeſt friends of liberty to make *the choice*, reſpecting which I, for one of its friends, ſhould not for an inſtant heſitate;—to prefer the *free Conſtitution* we have, rather than attempt to make it more free by aſſociating with men who do not underſtand what either the Conſtitution or liberty is, yet think themſelves capable of making a conſtitution, or making a world. Or, if theſe gentlemen will ſtill have it that the Conſtitution we live under is, either in law or fact, *a tyranny*,—then will they oblige us to prefer *of two tyrannies the cheaper and more moderate;* that which we have "without our ſtir,"—that of which we already know the extent,—that which we know we can bear,—

bear,—our *preſent* tyranny;—rather than fly to one illimitable in conceivable extent and duration,—the tyranny of *mobs and mob-leaders*,—for the gentlemen who can think ſo ſenſibly and reſpectably muſt themſelves be of one or other of theſe reſpectable bodies,—not *one* tyranny, but a ſucceſſion of anarchies,—"*permanent revolution*," and "*ſovereign inſurrection*,"—each purchaſed, and each got rid of, by the bleſſed medium of a civil war, or the whole at laſt got rid of by ſinking, not perhaps without convulſion, into the death-ſleep of the ſoul, the deſtruction at leaſt of all that can be called man in the heart,—a perfect deſpotiſm.

To point out to the people then, now that they are weak, if weak in truth they are, the errors that made them ſo, and the probable conſequences of perſiſting in thoſe errors, is not to add to their weakneſs, but to teach them how to recover, and how properly to apply, their ſtrength. I truſt this is not the office of an enemy. On the other hand, it is performing equally a duty to the government and legiſlature as to the people, to warn the former (as far as a very private individual may) what is the true ſpirit, or ſeems a ſtrongly prevalent diſpoſition, of the people they

they have to govern; to warn them to oppoſe *at the firſt inſtant*, and as they would their own ſubverſion, or anarchy itſelf, all popular attempts to command them; to warn them to govern firſt, even through that hated deſpotic thing *an army*, —and, if a *conſtitutional militia* pleaſe not theſe infatuated people, to give them *another army* in its ſtead,—leſs in numbers, but equally to be truſted perhaps, if the people ſhould continue turbulent;—to warn them, laſtly, to uſe this power as only the *firſt* and *neceſſary*, though *ungrateful* means of ſubduing popular frenzy, but to have recourſe alſo, and that *inſtantly*, or as ſpeedily as may be, to THE ONLY MEASURE which can finally and for ever ſoften, ſubdue, and diſarm this half-reaſoning, half-methodical madneſs,—that which muſt take from it all ſupport or countenance from the property, character, integrity, and ability of the country, I mean a reaſonable, moderate, and *unqueſtionably ſafe reform*. So may this civil ſtorm blow over.

In the hope that a review of errors in the conduct both of our rulers and people, the more liable to criticiſm and correction from the recency of the facts, might tend to prevent ſome at leaſt of their bad conſequences, and to put

others

others in a way of being happily nay glorioufly redeemed, have I written thefe ſketches.—It is this idea, gentlemen, which has borne me up, permit me to ſay, under occaſional diſguſts at certain parts of the duty I had undertaken in theſe pages,—under occaſional doubts too *how far*, on principles of public propriety and expediency, I ſhould go;—how far I ſhould probe the popular wounds, riſking an eternal offence to popular wilfulneſs;—how far I ſhould be juſtified in giving pain perhaps to any private feelings, in executing a poſſibly miſtaken idea of public duty;—whether, in fine, having once ſtepped forward, inconſiderably or not, I ſhould *go on*, or ſhould give my often ſuſpended little labours to the flames.—I have gone on;—*utcunque ferent ea facta!*—My love of country, ſuch as it has been, not leſſened, I can venture to ſay, by its imminent danger; my expectation of praiſe very moderate and very uncertain, of miſconception and miſrepreſentation tolerably well aſſured, and of ſupport or countenance from any party or any individual, no way aſſured, no way canvaſſed for. Having got into the buſineſs, nothing remained for me but to take myſelf out of it. I have done ſo, and have only to bear the

the conſequences as I may. Yet do I declare myſelf no candidate for any ſpecies of martyrdom, and I have had ſome reaſon in my time to be a little ſick of knight-errantry.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

with much reſpect,

your faithful

and moſt obedient Servant,

JOSEPH POLLOCK.

Dublin, June 15th, 1793.